

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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58th year of publication



Vatican critiques New Age spirituality

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Vatican is taking a strong stand against the New Age movement. In a document called "Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the 'New Age,'" it analyzes the characteristics of New Age thinking, the context in which it has arisen, and contrasts it with Christian spirituality.

The document's title is a reference to the Age of Aquarius — the astrological sign of the water-bearer. It presents Christ and Christianity as being the true alternative to the New Age, and points out mistaken beliefs within the New Age Movement.

Timing is right

The timing is right for this document, say the writers, because, "The beginning of the Third Millennium comes not only 2,000 years after the

birth of Christ, but also at a time when astrologers believe that the Age of Pisces — known to them as the Christian age — is drawing to a close. These reflections are about the New Age, which takes its name from the imminent astrological Age of Aquarius."

The success of New Age challenges the church to meet the spiritual needs of those attracted by New Age. "When the understanding of the content of Christian faith is weak, some mistakenly hold that the Christian religion does not inspire a profound spirituality and so they seek elsewhere," suggests the document. It warns against New Age beliefs, quoting Paul's exhortation in 1 Timothy 1:3-4: "to instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine or to concern themselves with myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the plan of

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The Vatican: Its new document analyzes the New Age Movement and warns Christians about it.

God that is to be received by faith."

Providing some historical background about New Age, the document says, "When one examines many New Age traditions, it soon becomes clear that there is, in fact, little in the New Age that is new." It connects New Age with Gnostic groups which grew up in the early days of Christianity, and gained momentum at the time of the Reformation in Europe. The general acceptance of Darwinist evolutionary theory and a focus on hidden spiritual powers or forces in nature, have been the backbone of much of what is now recognized as New Age theory, suggests the document.

A movement, not a religion

New Age is not a religion like Christianity, but more individualistic, says the document. "People who

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Tyndale, Amsterdam: a new venture in missions and evangelism

Ralph W. Vunderink

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan — It started in 1982 when two ministers, Drs. Robert Evans, then president of Greater Europe Mission, and Arthur Johnston, professor in the School of World Missions and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, together envisaged a world missions and evangelism program at the masters level somewhere in Europe. Three years later the opening ceremony took place (1985), and another three years later its first fruit, its first graduating class, was harvested (1988). As the first president of Tyndale Theological Seminary (1985-2000), Dr. Johnston saw his dream realized.

The Seminary was named after William Tyndale, an Oxford-educated Englishman, who first translated the New Testament from the original Greek (not from the Latin Vulgate as John Wycliffe had done) and then translated parts of the Old



Part of the Tyndale family, outside of Tyndale Theological Seminary in Badhoevedorp, a suburb of Amsterdam.

Testament. He succeeded in publishing his diligent and competent labors, not in his native England but in Germany.

One of Tyndale's unique fea-

tures is that its faculty and students are self-supporting. All students must raise their own financial support in order to become affiliated with the Seminary. Some receive love gifts

from supporting churches, individuals, or organizations. Others, mainly from within the European Union, are awarded renewable scholarships. It is amazing to note that with God's help even the really poor students manage to secure enough money to commence and complete their theological education at this young but vibrant institution. Likewise, the teachers must provide for their own expenses as their services are not paid.

Quality education

Students can choose between two instructional programs: the Master of Divinity Program, requiring three years of full-time study, and the Master of Arts in world evangelism, which takes one or two years of full-time concentration.

The two programs aim to balance between theory and practice, between scriptural education according to the highest possible

standards and practical application to different cultural and ethnic settings.

This dual goal should be welcomed by the theology faculty of the Free University, Amsterdam, with which Tyndale is seeking affiliation. The Seminary's pastoral emphasis could also address lack of theological education for ministers in the Reformed Churches due to the Dutch government's decision to consolidate theological education. The Free University will no longer provide training for ministers. The Seminary's commitment to the historic expression of the Christian faith, along with its genuine concern for Israel as God's chosen remnant (cf. Romans 11:1-7, 22-26) could promote a possible revival of biblical faith and Christian living in a country that is beginning to show some signs of a religious renewal.

See TYNDALE page 3...

News

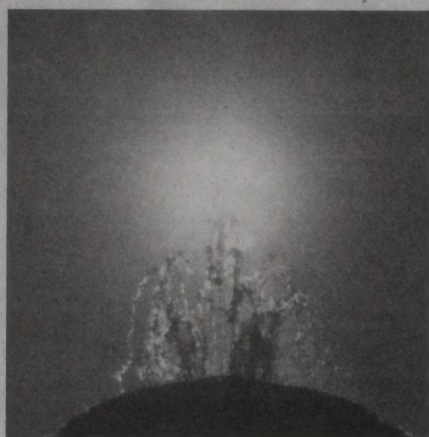
New Age poses a challenge for Christians, says Vatican

are part of the network do not necessarily know each other and rarely, if ever, meet. . . . It includes a bewildering array of people linked to the movement's main aims, but very diverse in the way they are involved and in their understanding of particular issues."

The authors examine some concepts connected with New Age, such as channeling, Feng Shui, and holistic health. Although the document uses a lot of complex language, it also contains some references to rock 'n' roll songs, such as "Aquarius" and "Good Vibrations."

Sharp contrast

The New Age concept of god contrasts sharply with the Christian one. Rather than God the Father, it focuses on 'Gaia' — Mother Earth. God is not personal, but is an energy force that connects the universe, from the New Age viewpoint. 'Christ' is a title that New Agers apply to anyone who has arrived at a state of consciousness where one



A fountain at the Vatican. The new document refers to Jesus as the bearer of the water of life.

perceives oneself to be divine and can thus claim to be a 'universal Master.' The document counters this with the Christian belief about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his power to save us from our sins.

"New Age imports Eastern religious practices piecemeal and re-interprets them to suit Westerners; this involves a rejection of the language of sin and salvation, replacing it with the morally neutral language of addiction and recovery," explains the document. "Traditional science and medicine are felt to be inferior to holistic approaches, as are patri-archal and particular structures in politics and religion." The document

notes, "New Age is a conscious search for an alternative to Western culture and its Judeo-Christian roots."

To help educate Christians better about New Age, the document

suggests that Catholic pastoral, cultural and spirituality centres "could also be used to address the confusion about New Age religiosity in a variety of creative ways, such as providing a forum for discussion and study." The authors admit that some Catholic centres of spirituality are actively involved in diffusing New Age religiosity in the Church. "This would, of course, have to be corrected, not only to stop the spread of confusion and error, but also so that they might be effective in promoting true Christian spirituality," write the authors.

Cathedral vs. fair

Christians will be able to communicate better with people attracted to the New Age if they take into account the symbolic language, the appeal of what touches the emotions, and if they are well-grounded in their own faith and the Bible's teachings.

The authors borrow from the New Age to use an image which

compares "traditional religions to cathedrals, and New Age to a worldwide fair. The New Age Movement is seen as an invitation to Christians to bring the message of the cathedrals to the fair which now covers the whole world. This image offers Christians a positive challenge, since it is always time to take the message of the cathedrals to the people in the fair. . . . Christians must issue forth from the cathedral, nourished by word and sacrament, to bring the Gospel into every aspect of everyday life," assert the writers. "To those shopping around in the world's fair of religious proposals, the appeal of Christianity will be felt first of all in the witness of the members of the Church, in their trust, calmness, patience, cheerfulness, and concrete love of neighbor, all the fruit of their faith nourished in authentic personal prayer."

Catholic leaders support Vatican's document on New Age

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Roman Catholic leaders are speaking out strongly in support of the Vatican's document on New Age — encouraging Christians to rediscover and seekers to discover the profound truths of Christianity, and reject the false claims of New Age.

Recently, Roman Catholic news service ZENIT interviewed one of the document's authors, Dr. Teresa Osorio Gonçalves, of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, co-ordinator of the working group

on Sects and New Religious Movements.

Differences from Christianity

Zenit: "Could you point out the principal differences between New Age and Christianity?"

Osorio: "Above all, we Catholics believe in a Creator God, a God who freely creates out of love and who creates man free. God is not identified with the universe (pantheism), nor has the universe issued from him by emanation. From

the Christian perspective, it is equally false to say that God is identified with man. Certainly, he dwells in man, but he is at the same time his creator, Lord, and Savior. . . . Otherness preserves personal dignity and man's freedom.

"We engage in dialogue with this God through prayer. Prayer is not the simple rediscovery of one's most profound self, but presupposes the meeting of two persons: it is to place oneself freely in adoration, in thanksgiving, in supplication. It is to be in harmony with the will of the Father."

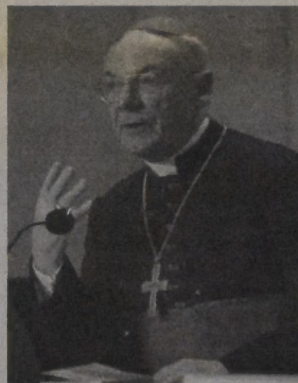
Zenit: "Followers of New Age seek liberating techniques. . . ."

Osorio: "We are in need of Christ's redemption, because we are sinners. The Christian sees man as fundamentally good, but wounded by original sin. No technique of liberation, no personal effort of concentration, no harmony of millions of consciences, can save man. Christ, the Son of God made man, who entered history to save us, is our only way of salvation."

Zenit: "What is the meaning of death and suffering?"

Osorio: "Followers of the New Age movement do not accept suffering or death. Redemption comes to them through techniques of expansion of conscience, rebirth, journeys to death's doors; redemption is also obtained with any method that helps one to relax, to increase one's vital energies."

"Instead, for Christians, suffering, lived in union with Jesus crucified, who revealed his love for men on the cross, is the source of



Cardinal Paul Poupard

salvation. Death is also a unique event: it is not access to a new reincarnation that will be followed by others, but the obligatory step to enter eternal life."

A most urgent challenge

When presenting the document to the press February 3, Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, said that the "New Age phenomenon, along with many other new religious movements, is one of the most urgent challenges for the Christian faith," reports Zenit. "It is a religious challenge and, at the same time, a cultural challenge." With its doctrines on God, man and the world, which are "incompatible with the Christian faith," the New Age "is at the same time symptom of a culture in profound crisis and a mistaken answer to the present situation of crisis."


According to the cardinal, the Church must respond to this situation by proposing Christian doctrine first of all, with "clarity and discernment" and, at the same time, by welcoming "people seeking meaning." This requires "a pastoral program directed to the specific culture of modern and post-modern societies, which give birth to the New Age phenomenon."

Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, wrote in a press release: "There are positive aspects in New Age, but taken all together it is not in accord with true Christian faith. The [Vatican's] document seeks to offer keys to understand this somewhat nebulous phenomenon of the New Age and to illustrate how it differs from the Christian faith."

"It is known that the New Age means the age of Aquarius. It is an astrological concept, according to which the age of Pisces, which was that of Christ, has developed and is now passing to the age of Aquarius, in which everything is gentle, there are no longer the rigors of Christianity, everything is based on harmony with creation, with the cosmos."

"By its title," Fitzgerald observed, "our document reminds us that Jesus Christ is the authentic bearer of the living water . . . he is the one who slakes man's thirst. . . . The true Christian finds the fullness of his spiritual life in Christ, without the need to seek it elsewhere."

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June 16, 17, 21	859	819	699
June 23, 24, 28, 30	919	879	759
July 01, 05, 07, 08, 12	959	919	779
July 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29	979	939	779
Aug. 02, 04, 05, 09, 11, 12	979	939	779
Aug. 16, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 30	979	939	779
Sep. 01, 02, 06, 08, 09, 13	899	839	689
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MAY 12, 2003

News

Tyndale Seminary gets help from North American profs

... continued from page 1

International in orientation and committed to global missions and evangelism, Tyndale permits students to prepare themselves to become church planters, missionaries, theological educators or pastors — especially in countries where theological education of an evangelical slant is virtually non-existent. It also strongly encourages its graduates return to their native countries in order to help the Christian cause there.

Personal reflections

During my recent 10-week stay, I was invited to teach three courses. In the first course, on the problem of evil, I concentrated on the suffering of the Old Testament figure of Job, who in the end challenged the Lord to explain the reason for his intense suffering but received an unexpected answer to his honest question: God's ways are beyond Job's finite understanding.

In the same two weeks one young graduate student at Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia) taught a course on the book of Genesis, while a seasoned scholar



PHOTOS COURTESY RALPH VUNDERINK

Tyndale is located close to this windmill, in which young Rembrandt made his first paintings.

introduced the students to Peter's two epistles.

In the second course, I first contrasted the five points of the Arminians and the Calvinists and then sought to show similarities and points of agreement between the two contending parties. I was kindly reminded that there were students drawn to both per-

spectives and each side sought to muster biblical support for its position. I also learned that not all Arminians think alike and that the Calvinism of Dr. Abraham Kuyper encompasses more than a faithful restating of the so-called five points of Calvinism (important as they are in their own way).

In the meantime, three of my

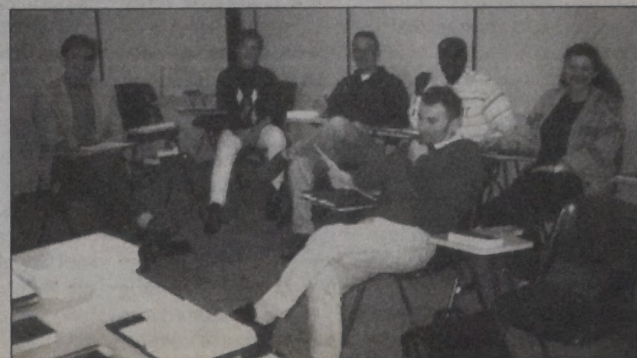
long-term colleagues were teaching courses in church management, cross-cultural missions, and the Old Testament.

My third course, on apologetics, examined various historical apologies of the Christian faith, which the students were then asked to evaluate. It gave the teacher an opportunity to study in greater depth the early Christian defenders of the faith like Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus.

I enjoyed our five-minute walk from the apartment to the school

during the mild winter months of 2003. I was privileged to befriend four students who came to our comfortable and furnished dwelling either by bike or by the electric streetcar, the tram. All six of us spent Wednesday evenings pondering questions pertaining to the Christian faith and Western philosophy.

Dr. Ralph Vunderink is a senior lecturer at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich.



A classroom of students at Tyndale.

Evergreen Terrace celebrates

Grimsby, Ontario — Opening ceremonies at Shalom Evergreen Terrace in Grimsby, held April 22, at 2 p.m. had to be moved indoors, as April lived up to its reputation and produced a chill wind and showers. But those who worked for years to make the five-storey Life Lease community a reality were glowing.

The main entry was packed with people as the mayor of Grimsby and a number of other officials congratulated the committee members for the vision and tenacity they showed to see through such an imposing project.

John Bergshoeff, chairman of the board of directors, said, that the Evergreen Terrace provides for "a Christian lifestyle which offers residents the opportunity to enjoy retirement without the cares and worries which have been part of their every day living for so many years." And they can do so as part of a community of people who share a similar outlook on life and live by common values.

After the speeches some ventured outside for a ribbon-cutting ceremony, but, being Dutch and wise, most headed to the main hall, where there was coffee and cake to be had. Many of the people at the ceremony were residents of Evergreen Terrace, as there are only a few units left to be sold.

All of the residents I talked to as I wolfed down cake were enthusi-



Board members cutting the ribbon

astic about their new living arrangement. All said they had moved from their own homes with misgivings, but they admitted their new home exceeded their expectations. They didn't miss their yards as much as they had thought they would.

"All our friends are getting older," one lady confided, "and many of them don't like to drive any more, especially at night. So when we were living at home, we had very few visitors in the evening. You have much more human contact here."

Another resident, a man, said he came fearing that there would be too much togetherness. "I was afraid that every time you stepped out into the hall, you'd bump into some-

body so that it would take forever just to get to your car." But he found the halls to be quiet. "You can have as much or as little contact as you want."

Spacious Rooms

After the opening ceremonies, visitors were given a tour of the building. The units, even the smallest ones, look spacious and airy. Because of a large bump-out, a section of the living room that juts out like a balcony and has windows on every side, the main room of each suite is flooded with light. In most suites these windows get at least a glimpse of the tree-covered escarpment just across the road on the southern side of the building, and



The gazebo at Shalom Evergreen Terrace

on the north anyone above the ground floor looks out over Lake Ontario.

Residents can park in the basement garage, enjoy a game of pool in the rec room on the third floor or do some woodworking in the basement workshop. If some day they need special help preparing meals or getting dressed, those services will be available too.

The committee members who worked so hard to make this community a reality for the aging segment of our community deserve congratulations and our thanks: John Bergshoeff (Chairman), Aleida Zeyl-Spoelstra (Secretary), Janet Janssen (Treasurer), John Koornneef, Peter Biesheuvel, Peter

Brouwer, Rob Heersink, Theo Meester, Dick Vermeer (Property manager) past vice-chair.

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Editorials

Must we tell same-sex couples who confess Christ and who have exchanged vows of faithfulness that they cannot be part of the body of Christ?

Harry der Nederlanden

One of the issues that will come up for discussion at Synod 2003 will be the decision of First Toronto to accept into full communion homosexuals living in committed relationships. Many of us will be reluctant to discuss the issue once again, preferring to simply affirm the decisions of 1973. I confess I am one of those.

Homosexual behavior, let me admit, is repugnant to me. I'm a heterosexual and don't begin to understand its attractions. So it used to be very easy for me to affirm any prohibitions (real or construed) I come across in Scripture relating to such behavior. After sharing an office with an openly gay colleague for a couple of years, however, and finding that in most respects his moral standards and those of his friends were higher than that of other college students, the old attitudes have become a problem.

Since that time, I've been of two minds on the issue. Like many of us, I look for a way to accept homosexuals, not just personally but also into the fellowship of the church; at the same time, however, I want to uphold the witness of Scripture and the holiness of the church. Is celibacy the only way they can be part of the body of Christ?

The usual texts that people fight over when discussing this issue really strike me as of only marginal importance, especially when it comes down to the question of whether to accept those who are living in a committed same-sex partnership.

The Bible as a whole, as the synodical report of 1973 points out, portrays heterosexual marriage as the normal and normative structure within which we perform the deepest mutual act of opening ourselves to one another physically, i.e. sexual intercourse. One reason for this is,

no doubt, that intercourse may bring children into the world and they must be raised in the divinely ordained space of the family.

Although we can quarrel about the meaning of specific texts, can we deny the broad normative framework Scripture gives regarding sex and marriage?

I see no way to argue that Scripture anywhere and in any way opens the door for the church to accept homosexual relationships, no matter how stable, as a part of God's creational purposes.

But there are many things that have become part of the ethic of the church that do not flow straight out of Scripture and that at first seemed to jar with it.

The hard-nosed stand against divorce held in my youth by the CRC and many other churches, for example, seems closer to the letter of the biblical text than our present practices. Yet, however much of the church believed that divorce is a bad thing, it found that it could no longer keep up the pretense that divorced men and women who had remarried were living in sin for the remainder of their lives. It seemed cruel.

Without repudiating Scripture or our stance on the sanctity of marriage, we found a way — a way we now see as more biblical — to accept as full members of the body of Christ those who have been wounded by a marriage break-up. When we now look around us and see how many are vibrant, active members of our church communities, we wonder how we could ever have shut the door against such people in the past.

I don't believe that it was first of all theology or biblical studies that changed our minds on divorce. It was seeing couples in our midst go through the agonies of a marital breakup, and, at a time when they needed the support and help of the church most, to see that support withdrawn. They were, as it were, left to flounder outside the gates. That seemed to us to contradict the very nature of the church.

We live in a broken, imperfect world in which we live as broken, imperfect people who are nevertheless able to share in the church something perfect that infuses our lives with hope and joy.

Discipline, too, is love

I try to put myself in the shoes of a parent whose child comes home one day to say that he is a homosexual and that he's going to live openly as one with his partner. Would I turn my child away? Few of us would. Yet, we say the church should. And the church speaks on behalf of a Father whose love is greater than that of any earthly father.

On the other hand, it is true that discipline, too, is love; it seeks to turn the wayward back to the way of life. It is important to preserve purity of the church, the body of Christ, so it can be a salting salt.

But I also understand the desire of First Toronto and others to embrace active homosexuals who continue to profess faith in Jesus Christ and who desire a committed lifestyle rather than a life of temptation and promiscuity.

Is it possible to approach homosexual partnerships in a way analogous to divorce? Divorce is an accommodation to our incapacity to rise above all aspects of our brokenness.

We now have many people who — be it by nature or nurture — cannot find fulfillment and mutuality within traditional

marriage. It is not something I pretend to understand. But traditional marriage is not an option for most of them.

Here I believe rehearsing the scientific evidence helps little or nothing. I think what homosexual persons tell us is enough. What difference does it make whether their orientation is mostly genetic or otherwise? There are those among us who say they simply cannot stomach a heterosexual relationship. We cannot dismiss them all as liars.

Can the church recognize that for them enduring friendships that have an intimacy analogous to marriage are a legitimate way to ward off temptations that are much worse? In such a relationship, although not creationally normative, at least they can also experience some of the hope and joy that married people do (at least, some married people do).

Emergency structure

According to some historians (I'm not competent to judge their accuracy), a large segment of the early church read the letters of Paul to say that the best, purest form of Christian life was to be single and chaste. Marriage was an emergency structure to cope with strong sexual drives and weakness in the face of temptation. The church long ago rejected that understanding of marriage. But might it not be apropos for same-sex unions?

Here I am just tossing out feelers — with fear and trembling, since there is so much passion associated with this issue.

Can we uphold sex within marriage as the (much transgressed against) norm and at the same time accept a formalized kind of partnership for homosexuals as an emergency institution, an accommodation to our weakness?

In a certain sense, isn't the church itself an accommodation to our weakness? Indeed, the incarnation of the Son of man and his ministry and death were a cosmic accommodation to our weakness. And it is plain for anyone with eyes to see that even those of us who are faithful to our marriage vows, who do not steal or murder, who are gainfully employed and who vote and pay our taxes — moral, middle class folks — fall far short of what Christ demands of us.

The purity and holiness of the church is found first of all not in us but in him.



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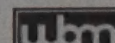
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Letters

Let's learn lessons about peace from history

We all know that the final episode in history will be the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What a day that will be, when the Son of man will be seen by all, when He will establish his Kingdom forever.

History is linear: everything that has happened and will happen still is the prelude of things to come. History makes sense as long as we look at it with the eye of faith. This does not take anything away from the fact that in history we see many parallels. As we sometimes say, history repeats itself. Oftentimes we seem to forget that. The past is a school where we can better understand the future.

Peace at all cost?

The time in which we are living today may well be one of these occasions when we have to go back to school again. We hear of many people who only have one song they repeat endlessly: "Let there be peace." And if there is anything I can most heartily agree with, then that is this zeal. But peace at all costs? There are many church leaders who join the ranks of the peace movement, as we also could read in CC. Sometimes I wonder in how far the church members really listen to what the "leaders" say. Let us never forget that according to good

Reformed doctrine the leadership of the church is to be found nowhere else but in the local consistory room.

Harry Antonides in an article in the March 31 issue briefly refers to the time just before World War II. He cites history, especially the return of Neville Chamberlain, after Hitler had led him by the nose in Munich. When Mr. Chamberlain left his plane in London, complete with top hat and umbrella, he waved a piece of paper and exclaimed: "Peace for a thousand years." This only gave Hitler more time to prepare for the coming war. Hitler must have had a wonderful time when he saw that picture. Each time after he had invaded another country he stated that this was his final territorial demand.

Would WW II still have taken place?

One sometimes wonders what would have happened if England, France and the USA would have stopped Hitler when he took his first step: the invasion of the Rhineland. Would WW II still have taken place? He could have been stopped, but there was only one doctrine, which was very understandable just after the bloody First World War: Peace at all cost. Of

course, it is only speculation, but how many millions of lives would have been spared; how much destruction would have been prevented!

On the list of required reading for today should be Winston Churchill's book: *The Gathering Storm*, where he describes the history of the '20s and the '30s. Here we can see very clearly the parallels between then and now. I wish that leaders today would take all of this to heart.

Do I like war? Absolutely not. My generation has seen war in all its ugliness. We saw Jews being transported in cattle cars on their way to destruction camps. We have

experienced what hunger is. We have lived under the constant fear of either being killed in air raids, or being shipped to concentration camps. We trembled when we heard the sirens, warning us of an impending air raid. Do I say this in order to have people feel sorry for my generation? Not at all. Let's we forget. By the way, have I ever heard of a protest in front of an Iraqi Embassy somewhere in the world when it became known that that regime had gassed thousands of people and oppressed its citizens?

Gerard Bouma,
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Hielema appreciated

Often I disagreed with Bert Hielema's ideas. Frequently his research showed signs of shoddiness. Even his last column (March 31) suffered from it when he referred to Oswald Spengler (wrong/misleading publication dates; quotes out of context, etc.). Probably when Hielema wrote his column I was trying to read Spengler's two volumes, but I must admit that I found his books reductionistic and bereft of any Christian insight.

But back to Hielema; whatever his flaws, I appreciated his challenging comments, although I can imagine why many people objected to his often negative perspectives. Too bad that he decided that he could not continue with his column. Was he right to challenge the notion that President Bush was a Christian? To be honest, I have questioned

it myself, but perhaps I should say that from my perspective Bush's type of Christianity is far removed from my understanding of Scripture. Perhaps Hielema should have stated something similar.

According to the editor, Hielema was asked for evidence, but from Hielema's negative perspective Bush's disregard for the environment, his disregard for international conventions and warlike intentions, etc. were adequate evidence. He may have been one-sided, but so is Harry Antonides, whom I find gullible, but whose one-sidedness seems to be more acceptable than Hielema's (as an editorial comment suggests).

Bert den Boggende,
Brooks, Alta.

Who speaks for 'the Church'?

Now that Saddam Hussein's reign of terror has mercifully been brought to an end, it would seem like a good time to make a rather urgent proposal.

I propose that the Christian Reformed community engage in a thorough review of just what is the denomination's responsibility in terms of public pronouncements on various issues.

The questions that should be addressed would include: When and why should the CRC speak? Who decides what should be said? How do we hold our representatives to account?

My proposal is made in light of a number of recent printed statements made on behalf of my denomination which create the impression of reflecting Christian Reformed positions.

Disagreeing strongly

I disagree strongly with the February 28, 2003, "ecumenical" letter sent on behalf of a number of Canadian church leaders, including representation from the Christian Reformed Church, which included the use of Scripture in, to put it mildly, an inappropriate fashion.

I have grave difficulty with the letter to Mr. Jean Chrétien, prepared by our Burlington office, dated March 12, 2003. Contrary to what is said in the letter, I and many Canadians have come to the conclusion that our government has not been very courageous, nor does Chrétien have much stature, while for a host of reasons the UN is quite impotent when it comes to dealing with matters other than relief efforts.

In my view the above statements do not adequately reflect biblical teachings about the role of government. It would seem to me that we get involved as the Christian Reformed Church in matters not germane to the task of the church, to the detriment of the church and the well-being of the world. This is not just a

matter of quibbling about the church as institute and the church as organism.

Astounding one-sidedness

In all the material I have read from a range of church bodies regarding the Iraqi question, I have seen an astounding one-sidedness. There is repeated reference to promoting peace while the matter of promoting justice, without which there can be no peace, gets only passing mention. As well, one could ask the question whether following the recommendations these bodies made would not simply have meant a continuation of Saddam Hussein's reign of terror and all that entailed.

Our denomination's calling in the public sphere ought to be the subject of a thorough review rooted in the Reformed, non-pacifist reading of Scripture.

To quote a non-Reformed scholar, George Weigel:

"There is a charism [gift] of political discernment that is unique to the vocation of public service. That charism is not shared by bishops, stated clerks, rabbis, imams, or ecumenical and interreligious agencies. Moral clarity in a time of war demands moral seriousness from public officials. It also demands a measure of political modesty from religious leaders and public intellectuals, in the give-and-take of democratic deliberation."

I respect the leadership of my church. I have warm personal relations with many of them. They should not be put in a position where they have to speak outside their "ken," thereby giving needless occasion for division in the fellowship of believers and weakening the church's witness in the world.

Hank Kuntz,
Etobicoke, Ont.

40 years of reading

Dear editor,

To my great regret, I need to inform you that it is time to cancel my subscription to Christian Courier. After reading your paper for well over 40 years, enjoying it all those many years, it has come to an end. My third brain hemorrhage in the past six years has made

reading impossible.

Over all those years, the name changed, the editors changed, but always it had one thing in common - an excellent, informative publication.

Thank you. I shall really miss it.
Nel Molenaar
Langley, B.C.

Christian Courier

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Opinion/Agriculture

Saving the definition of marriage

Dear Editor,

RE: *Should The Government Re-define The Nature Of Marriage?*
(Apr. 28/03)

Thank you for allowing some space in CC in connection with the emerging discussion which is partly resulting from your front-page story of April 28, and the report in *The Catholic Register* of April 27.

On April 11, I appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The Committee had invited me to respond to *A Discussion Paper* (Nov. 2002) by the Department of Justice Canada. I made a presentation as an individual citizen, and so I did not speak on other people's behalf.

My opening statement and submission, "Legal Recognition of Diverse Human Relationships – A Public Justice Response to the Reality of Diversity on 'Marriage and Legal Recognition of Same-sex Unions,'" focused on certain guidelines for public justice and a few policy recommendations.

As a result of the reports in *The Catholic Register* and *Christian Courier* on what I said to the Commons Committee (such as: My short creed is, "God loves all, the church should welcome all, and the state should protect all."), and other remarks, some people within and beyond the Catholic and Reformed communities are asking for clarification. Some are wondering what my policy recommendations actually stated.

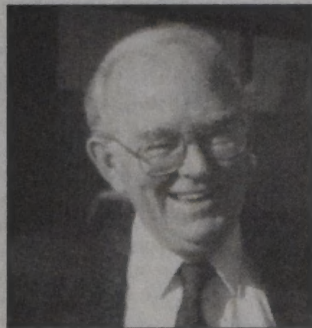
To facilitate mutually beneficial dialogue, they read as follows:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Committed Conjugal Relationships

1) Marriage, the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others – a definition which has existed since before Confederation – clearly has a continuing role in our modern society. This reality should continue to be reflected in Canadian laws. The definition of marriage should be clear and precise and not be expanded. Legal clarity is essential.

2) Committed conjugal relationships other than marriage (commit-



Gerald VandeZande

mitted same-gender relationships) appear to have continuing roles in our modern society. This reality should also be reflected in Canadian laws. Definitions of committed common law couples and committed same-gender relationships should be clear and precise.

Legal Entitlements

3) Marriages, common-law couples and same-gender committed relationships, *though they differ in character*, should be recognized and supported equally. These different conjugal relationships should be legally entitled to the same rights and responsibilities, the same benefits and obligations, including the legal relationships between the partners and their children.

Children's Rights

4) The adoption of children by couples living in committed conjugal relationships that are legally recognized should be subject to the explicit provision that no person or couple has the legal right to adopt with *automatic* entitlement to a child. The basic distinction of the legal right to apply to adopt a child and any notion of *automatic* entitlement to adopt a child is crucial, especially for the well-being of the child.

Civil Unions and Public Declaration of Mutual Commitment

5) Marriage and other committed conjugal relationships should be defined legally as civil unions. The partners should go through a civil ceremony, *regardless of whether or not there has been or will be a reli-*

Do it yourself dead end
(and a way out)

Farmers are receiving the friendly ultimatum: to survive, adopt the market economy idea or get out. The governments will subsidize a farmer's single-minded pursuit of profit or help to retrain him for non-agricultural employment.

Profit is necessary to the future of any farm, but profit depends on other more basic essentials. There is little or no indication that the powers that be recognize the foundational importance of preserving a significant land base, rural community, long-term sustainability and the strategic importance of agriculture to the country as a whole.

The Federal government has come up with a plan to "revolutionize" agriculture in Canada, and some provinces are signing on for promised federal money, Alberta included. The emphasis is on enhancing exports, value-added agriculture (farmers putting food into retail form), making products more consumer and environmentally friendly and so on. The "pillars" have merit but they are virtually all related to short-term economic goals, and other foundational pillars are missing. For instance, there is no land use policy to preserve even the most fertile land for food production to make sure that agriculture thrives.

One week not enough

Alberta's annual designated agriculture week occurred in March. It is wonderful when public attention is drawn to food production. But giving agriculture a week is reminiscent of Mother's Day when we salve guilty consciences with brief attention and then go on our way ignoring or taking advantage of Mother the rest of the year. Agriculture is returned to the farmers for the remaining 51 weeks of the year when they are expected to slot into a selected economic emphasis. Unfortunately an economic pillar alone cannot sustain a system because when all factors are not given their due the whole system falls down.

The market economy has become a fanatic obsession to an array of Western governments including the current Alberta administration. That was blatantly illustrated in a special section of Alberta's main daily papers during "agriculture week." There, an anonymous provincial "agriculture official" was quoted as saying that drought can only be a disaster when it is not managed correctly.

I understand someone wishing to be nameless making such a wild claim. There is no such thing as "drought-proofing." What about the poor souls this summer forced to choose between either taking an

religious ceremony, if they want their particular committed conjugal relationship legally recognized.

It is essential that Canada (Parliament) create an appropriate legal mechanism or "city hall" process. This official process governing the establishment and solemnization of civil unions should require a *Public Declaration of Mutual Commitment*, containing appropriate pledges and promises confirming the partners' mutual faithfulness and loyalty.

The religious ceremony (service of blessing) would not have a civic/legal dimension. The religious ceremony would be *optional* and not take the place of the *civic* ceremony formalizing the partners' *Public Declaration of Mutual Commitment*.

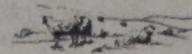
This Civil Union and Public Declaration, entered into and made before legal witnesses, would help to ensure that the partners are legally entitled to the just protection of their civil rights and fundamental freedoms and to the same fiscal treatment, pension and other social benefits now available federally and provincially.

Needed: further dialogue

As I stated in my brief to the Commons Committee, "Clearly, these submissions require thoughtful discussion. I welcome your comments, questions and suggestions as to how Parliament can most equitably and effectively resolve these basic justice and human rights issues,

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE



impossible loss buying hay or selling off their herds? Some bureaucrats insulated from reality are crunching numbers on the basis of unsubstantiated criteria.

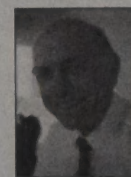
To propose that we can go on farming year after year without adequate moisture to grow crops attributes god-like power to mere mortals. To the contrary, we ought to get down on our knees and ask forgiveness for ignoring the Almighty and assigning ourselves omnipotence. I must confess that I have tried to put out of mind the possibility that God has allowed the drought because of the sin of his people ignoring his handiwork, sovereignty and largesse. God, being God, does not enjoy and eventually does not countenance being ignored, especially by his people.

It so happened that during "agriculture week" in the March edition of the "Today" publication, the eminent writer wondered if "modern plagues of our society – the drug culture, the occult, pornography, pollution, terrorism – are God's way of reminding us that the gods of medicine, spiritual powers, sex, industrial development, and economic power are false gods".

The November, 2002, *Journal of the Rural Theology Association* of Britain, too, asked the question, "Does God Speak Circumstantially?" The answer, drawn from instances in the Bible, was basically that the eternal, all-powerful God's purposes can be served by any and all events.

The Bible, especially in the Old Testament, makes it clear that God is not above seriously damaging his beloved creation to make it less accessible to nations intent on disobeying him and his laws. Check out in particular the book of Jeremiah. Drought happens to be featured prominently there – God withholding seasonal rains.

Fortunately, God is a God of love and his people may depend on the fact, however unpleasant, that discipline is intended to bring his people back to him and his way. God stands ready as liberator from the single-minded impoverished profit motive to his all-encompassing way.



May we receive the grace to turn from our wicked ways and he will again bless our land (II Chron. 7:14).

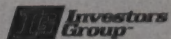
Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.

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Scarborough,
Former National Public Affairs Director,
Citizens for Public Justice
Volunteer Spokesperson, Campaign
Against Child Poverty
Author, *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith
Perspectives and National Priorities*

based on public justice for all and the common good of all."

I am thankful that such discussion is already proven to be very valuable and, with your help, will continue to be.

Education

A time to question

Tony Campolo
Eastern University

Solomon, the son of King David said, "To every thing there is a season," and this is a season to question who we are and what we believe.

When Jesus told us to love our enemies and to overcome evil with good, did he mean it for personal relationships only, or should we be living this out on a societal level as well?

When he said that those who live by the sword, die by the sword, was he telling us to abandon war as a solution to world problems? And, if he did mean that, why did he tell his disciples that there would come a time when they should buy swords for themselves?

We are told that if our enemies hunger, we should feed them; if they are naked, we should clothe them; and if they are sick, we should take care of them. Was he being realistic? And what would the Iraqi people think of us if, over the last decade, instead of an embargo that contributed to the death of 500,000 children, we had done such things? Would doing what Jesus said have, in biblical language, "heaped coals of fire" on the head of Saddam Hussein?

In the Beatitudes we are told that if we are true children of God, we will be peacemakers. But, then in Ecclesiastes 3:8 we are told that there is a time to make war.

Such questions become painful for me, as a professor at Eastern University, from where some of my students have gone to Iraq as soldiers, intensely believing that they are liberators out to destroy the Hitler of the 21st Century. But, then there are also those three of my students who have gone to Iraq as part of a group called Witness for Peace. These three students, out of a sense of doing what Jesus would do, are committed to working in hospitals in Baghdad to care for those wounded by American bombs. They see America, not as the liberator of the oppressed, but as a powerful bully.

While we struggle with such deep concerns, there are certain rules that

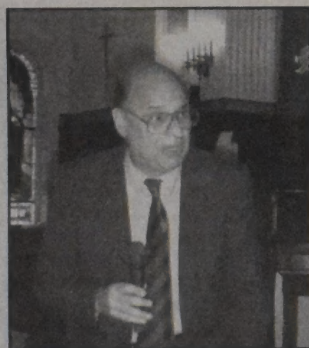
we must follow if we are to come out of this time as the people of God.

1. We must not demonize those who differ with us, nor impute to them evil motives. There are those who call anti-war demonstrators Communists and unpatriotic. On the other hand, I have seen signs that accuse President Bush of conducting the war to secure more oil. Such judgments are unfair. Let God be the judge of motives and let us simply declare what we believe with malice towards none.

2. We must be ready to listen to those who differ with us. True listening requires that each listener entertain the possibility that he or she could be wrong. Each must be ready to learn from the other and, if what is learned is such as to convict, be ready to change.

3. No one should claim that God is on his or her side. Saddam Hussein claimed that God was on his side. May God spare us from such arrogance and drive us to ask continually if we are on God's side.

4. Do not get caught up in quoting Romans 13 and declaring that all those who dissent against rulers who claim to be ordained by God are rebelling against God. Remember, the church in Nazi Germany bought into that belief, and such a doctrine was used by Saddam Hussein to still those Iraqis who wanted to overthrow him. In the midst of our existential struggles, let each of us pray for the preservation of life among all of those soldiers who are in harm's way, and for the innocent civilians who are caught up in a struggle they did not choose.



Tony Campolo

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A world of books

"I must say I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a good book." — Groucho Marx

I asked a student one day what sort of books he'd been reading lately. "None," he declared. "I only read one book, and that's the Bible."

I sat across from him, peeking out between two large piles of books, none of which was the Bible. I felt a little sheepish. After all, I am the chaplain. What was I doing with all this un-Inspired literature? Was the Bible not enough for me?

There is some old advice for people who get lost in books. "Book learning can make you crazy," I imagine some wizened old-timer saying, circling his finger around his ear. The world of books can be an escape from reality that in turn becomes a prison one chooses to live inside. Experience is the better teacher, and books are, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, "a mighty bloodless substitute for life." Books are the scholarly idol.

The Book Lives On

Books are dangerous, but they will always be the main building blocks of the university. Pundits love to sensationalize new media, but the truth is the book remains the strongest medium for shaping a critical mind.

Television has slipped into a number of classrooms, but the book holds the core of the curriculum. Neil Postman's book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* critically discusses some of the changes the flashing screen has made to our culture. The book teaches us about the tube—its visceral appeal, the idolatry of image, and the socialization of consumption, to touch on just a few things.

Many excitedly prophesied how radically education would be changed by another new media: the computer. As I type, I admit computers have permeated the university on both academic and administrative levels. But as Quentin Schultze writes in his book *Habits of the High-Tech Heart*, this is not always for the better. He explains how the distance, the speed, and the idolatry of efficiency that computers exalt grinds against the development of the slow, personal nature of basic virtue. It takes a critical book to make that clear.

I'll name one more alternative: newspapers. While papers like *The Manchester Guardian Weekly* may provide some deeper insight, I think Thomas Jefferson said it best: "The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers." To be informed may be a minimum, but the goal of a good education is much broader and deeper.

Let me give you a good example of university education. One of the most scholarly programs at Brock University is the "Great Books" program. This four year program takes the student through what it has deemed to be the greatest books of Western civilization, covering every major subject and every major author. In-

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman



cluding the Bible. These students, it seems to me, are always among the most thoughtful and culturally aware. Check the website to see if you agree with their elite list: <http://books.mirror.org/gb.home.html>

Books are Calvinist

The mass production of the book came hand in hand with the Reformation. In fact, there would be no Protestant Church without the printing press. So as a Calvinist, to love the book is part of our calling to love God "with all our mind." This has been bred in my Christian schooled bones. Meeting this student I mentioned above — in the university, an institution built around the book, I was perplexed. What better way (in such a place as this) to learn about God, his world, his Word, and ourselves than by slowly reading some good books?

Book reading can be a good disease. I remember a very different student coming into my study one day. "Ah, I see you are a bibliophile as well," he said, diagnosing me as he gazed at my cramped shelves. "Bibliophiles" or "book-lovers" gravitate to used bookstores like bird watchers to marshland. You never know when you might just stumble onto a really rare find. Each book gives you a new perspective, a fresh insight onto the creation. Or at very least, something to disagree with.

Books as Paper Friends

Last year I walked into a pastor's study that was surrounded on all sides by books — floor to ceiling. Bible study aids, pastoral care manuals, cultural analysis texts, novels, poetry — it was a personal library. "These are my tools," he said. "And my friends."

Every book is a conversation with a new friend and thus an invitation into their home world. Reading broadens our circle, and makes our lives richer, fuller. "We read to know that we are not alone," is the famous line from *Shadowlands*, a movie based on a book writer. Books are an introduction to the global family, and not reading is like not traveling, never going past the front porch.

Books will never be as influential or as engaging as the live, enthusiastic teacher-friend, but they will always be one of the greatest shapers of the critical mind, which is one aspect of the fuller idea of wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is the art of knowing what not to read, and when to enjoy some fresh air. But do not put this newspaper down. Despite what I

said about newspapers, *The Christian Courier* is an exception. I dare say, it ought to be added to the Great Books list. . . .



Peter Schuurman is currently on sabbatical from his campus chaplaincy work at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Knowing God is more than knowing about Him; it is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to you, and being dealt with by Him as He takes knowledge of you. Knowing about Him is a necessary precondition of trusting in Him, but the width of our knowledge about Him is no gauge of our knowledge of Him.

... James I. Packer, *Knowing God*

Church

Nigeria re-elects its Christian president

Nigeria — The incumbent President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian, defeated his 19 rivals — all military men — in elections some say were far from perfect but probably indicative of the popular vote. Obasanjo received over 60 percent of the vote. About 40 million people, two-thirds of the electorate, cast votes.

To assure that the process would be fair, Nigeria invited foreign observers from the European Union to monitor polling stations. The Catholic Church in Nigeria also deployed 30,000 people across the country to monitor fairness at the polls.

These are only the second elections to be held since the country's fledgling democracy fell to military rule in 1983.

Although the observers were relieved at the relatively low level of violence, they did report incidents of ballot stuffing, miscounting and fraud in places. In the southeast some attacks on voters and gunfights between factions were also reported, with a dozen deaths. With the long history of religious and political violence, however, this passed for a peaceful election in Nigeria.

Obasanjo's main rival was Muhammadu Buhari, who served as military dictator of Nigeria in the 1980's. Even before the elections results were in, when the polls showed he would lose, Buhari declared the results fraudulent. Buhari ran on a pro-sharia platform, calling for the imposition of Islamic law. Since Nigeria's population is split nearly 50/50

between Muslims and Christians, this assured that he would certainly lose the Christian vote and also the votes of moderate Muslims.



Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo

For most Nigerians, therefore, religion plays a decisive role in their choice of leaders. Over the years, says Obed Minchakpu, Nigerian correspondent for Compass news, religion has become a divisive tool in the hands of the political class. Muslim-Christian rivalry is so intense that none of the 30 political parties in the country has managed to develop a truly national support base. Muslims consider Obasanjo's ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to be a Christian party, while Christians see Buhari's All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) to be a Muslim party.

Unscrupulous politicians, says Minchakpu, have learned to manipulate Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity to win at the polls. Such exploitation has sparked inter-religious violence. In the past four years of democracy, an estimated half million people have died and billions of dollars worth of property has been destroyed as a result of religious strife.

The implementation of sharia (Islamic law) in 12 northern states has exacerbated the political tensions. The central government's inaction in confronting proponents of Islamic law has contributed to the deepening rift between Muslims and Christians. Analysts believe that, if the government had acted promptly to resolve the sharia issue when it first arose, it could have salvaged the human and material resources lost to the religious conflict and avoided the religious polarization evident today, says Minchakpu.

Three days before the presidential elections, Buhari declared: "I will not accept defeat...."

In an official statement, he added: "It must be remembered that those who refused to learn from history will sooner or later become history themselves."

The history Buhari was referring to could be that of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who was re-elected as president in 1983 Nigeria's in elections that were condemned widely as irregular and fraudulent. Shagari was only in power for four months before Major-General Buhari, accusing Shagari of systematic corruption, toppled

him in a coup and seized power. So Buhari's words were taken as a threat.

Obasanjo's camp reacted angrily, and warned that Buhari's move could damage Nigeria's attempts to secure itself a democratic future. "This is one of the tragedies of African politics in which losers refuse to accept defeat even when it is genuine," said a spokesman for Obasanjo, warning about dangers to the survival of Nigerian democracy.

Christian and Muslim leaders urged Nigerians to accept the results and pleaded for restraint among their followers.

"Unless Nigerians tread the path of peace and love in their day-to-day dealings with each other, the country will face chaos and be destroyed," said Sunday Mbang, head of Nigeria's Methodist Church and president of the ecumenical Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), in a message to churches.

Muhammadu Maccido, sultan of Sokoto and viewed as leader of Nigeria's Muslims — who make up half of the country's 130 million people — called on the people to "exercise great restraint and tolerance and accept the outcome of the elections as the true verdict of Nigerians."

"I place in God's Almighty hands my personal victory from last Saturday's presidential elections which has been formally declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission," said Obasanjo, after the result was announced.

Obasanjo received 24.5 million votes against 12.7 million for Buhari.

In an editorial, the Christian Sci-

ence Monitor said the "most worrisome aspect of the race, however, is that the vote counts show a wider split between the Muslim north and Christian south; Obasanjo, a Christian, needs to work on that problem too."

Obasanjo was elected to his first term in 1999 in the country's first democratic elections in 15 years. Over 10,000 people have died in religious, political and economic clashes during Obasanjo's first term, according to Reuters. Of particular concern to Christians are the attempts in the northern part of the country to establish sharia law, the harsh Muslim code of conduct, as a part of the civil and criminal court systems of at least 12 Nigerian states.

In the past two years, violence between Christians and Muslims broke out in the cities of Kaduna, Jos, Osogbo, Lagos and Abuja.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's economic fortunes have continued to dwindle. Recent reports show that over 70 million Nigerians still live in abject poverty, despite the country's abundant oil wealth. The United Nations Development Program has ranked Nigeria among the 10 poorest nations in the world. Transparency International, a non-governmental organization set up in 1993 to fight global corruption, has ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries.

(With files from Compass, ENI, ANS and The New York Times.)

Calvinist students making themselves obnoxious on Baptist campuses

Grapevine, Texas — The National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, meeting in Grapevine, Texas in March, discussed what to do about "aggressive" Calvinist students who are pushing their beliefs on Baptist campuses.

The moderator of a panel discussion complained that Calvinism seems to be catching on especially among the youth, who are influenced by the teachings of John Piper, the author of *Desiring God*. "It has a militant nature," he said, "especially around the issue of worship. Calvinists imply that non-Calvinists can't worship as well as Calvinists."

Roger Olson, professor of theology at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary said, "They're reaching into youth groups, pressuring them to adopt Calvinism. I have nothing against garden-variety Calvinism, but aggressive Calvinism is another matter."

Apparently many students are

championing "five-point Calvinism" (TULIP) and accusing Arminians of heresy. Most American Baptist churches have been influenced by the teachings of Arminius, whose teaching are refuted in the Canons of Dort.

Warren Mc Williams, a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University, said, "It's like they've found a system that is neat, makes sense, gives them a package, is biblical, and gives them a handle for their theology. It's firm and secure in response to their insecurities."

One of the best antidotes to their militancy, he suggested, was to urge them to read Calvin himself. Most of them, he found, had not, but had learned their Calvinism from some simplified interpretation.

Olson said, "Baptists have always had two strains, Arminian and Calvinist. Neither is heresy." He urged respect for both traditions.

Calvinism isn't nearly so rigid as

many Calvinists make it out to be, Olson said. That's particularly true among Calvinists who describe their beliefs as Reformed theology.

"There's a lot of diversity," he noted. "I know leading Reformed theologians who do not believe in TULIP. These categories are not hardened. [Theologians] can be Reformed without being rigid."

Preban Vang, professor of theology at Ouachita Baptist University, said college and seminary students shouldn't embrace a theological system until they have studied and explored. "I want them to think. I don't want them to be a Calvinist or an Arminian. I want them to be able to systematically explore the Scriptures and theological thought," he said.

The *Desiring God* website: www.desiringgod.org features the work of John Piper and Jonathan Edwards.

(With files from the American Baptist Press)

Evangelical group in Britain warns about 'Prosperity Gospel'

Al Webb

(RNS) An evangelical organization in Britain warns that thousands of Christians are being taken in by a new style of preaching from a so-called "prosperity gospel" that promises untold wealth to believers.

The study produced by the Evangelical Alliance, an umbrella organization for Britain's evangelical churches, said the teachings in what some critics call the "blab it and grab it gospel" encourage worshippers to pray for material wealth. The prosperity gospel, the "Faith, Health and Prosperity" report said, claims that any money believers give to their preacher will be multiplied by God hundreds of times or more in favor of the giver. The danger, it said, is that "prosperous, charismatic preachers" could replace Jesus as the object of admiration and adulation.

"Some preachers teach that material blessings, along with physical wealth, are confirmation from God of a righteous and holy lifestyle," it said. The study said the movement "has been an unabashed advocate of material prosperity, and this has naturally invited the charge that it promotes a lifestyle and ethos fundamentally at odds with the values of the kingdom of God."

Church

Debate rages on formation of a truth commission

Muuna Wamuli

NAIROBI (AANA) April 7 – Intense debate on the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission has ensued in Kenya, following absence of a precise format of how such a commission should be set up.

Following recent exposure of torture chambers in Nairobi, where political "dissidents" were subjected to inhuman conditions by the past regime, church leaders, human rights organizations, the private sector and ordinary Kenyans have been in agreement that such a commission was necessary to heal the country.

Church leaders have maintained that for the country to continue existing in harmony, there were certain truths about the past that the ordi-

nary people needed to know.

"The country needs to undo the evils of economic sabotage, communal land alienation and violations against human rights," Rev. Timothy Njoya, a spokesperson of the National Convention Executive Council (NCEC), said here.

Rev Njoya was speaking at a meeting called by Transparency International in Nairobi on March 28, to launch public debate on building a case for the creation of a truth commission. Divisions emerged concerning timing.

"We are not as yet ready for a truth and reconciliation commission. Such a commission follows the regeneration of trust amongst the people, it does not precede it. There are problems still dividing us," Pheroze

Nowrojee, a prominent lawyer, said in a statement presented at the meeting.

Secretary-General of National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), Rev Mutava Musyimi, advocated for establishment of a commission after completion of the stalled constitutional review process, set to resume later this month.

Rev Musyimi argued that there was a risk of divided attention, and that the country may not have the capacity to run two processes concurrently.

"The two require a lot of energy and intellectual input," he said, adding, "[We] are committed and focused on the completion of the review process, and we should therefore begin

this task after its completion."

Aware of the complex issues that the commission will deal with, Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Mr. Kiraitu Murungi, warned that revelations by the commission could tear the country apart.

"The Commission will open up ghosts of the past, which must be exorcised. Some people will be ruined by past misdeeds, leading to demands for revenge," said the minister.

Kenyan churches disagree over call to make Christianity state religion

Fredrick Nzwill

Nairobi (ENI) – A proposal to declare Christianity to be Kenya's state religion is generating heated debate among the country's churches.

The proposal comes from a group called the Kenya Church, which includes Methodists and a number of Pentecostal churches. It comes as Muslims are calling for the entrenchment of Islamic courts in the country's constitution.

But the Roman Catholic Church and most mainstream Protestant denominations are urging that religion and the state be kept separate.

The proposal to make Christianity a state religion came in advance of a national constitutional conference, opening in Nairobi on Monday.

"To safeguard the interests of the Christian faith, Christianity must of necessity be declared the official religion in Kenya, provided that all other religions are accorded liberty to practice their beliefs," leaders of the Kenya Church group said in a statement.

The draft constitution to be discussed by about 600 delegates attending the meeting states that "there shall be no state religion" in Kenya. But according to leaders of the Kenya Church group, Christianity should be the official faith, since almost 4 out of 5

Kenyans are Christians.

About 78 per cent of Kenya's 30 million population is Christian and some 10 per cent Muslim, with others having mostly traditional animist beliefs. Muslims, however, claim that 20 per cent of Kenyans now practice their faith.

The Rev. Mutava Musyimi, general secretary of the National Christian Council of Kenya, rejecting the

call for Christianity to be made a state religion, said all religions should be treated equally.

"Our country faces serious issues of poverty, tribalism and tribal based politics. We must do everything to rise above tribal, religious and localized considerations and together forge ahead in building a unified nation," Mutava told journalists in Nairobi.

Kenya's Anglican archbishop, Benjamin Nzimbi, also rejected the call.

"Since the draft constitution respects the freedom of worship, there is no need to turn around and choose a single denomination for protection," the Daily Nation newspaper reported him saying.

Roman Catholic Archbishop, Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, said: "A constitution should be a guiding document and the view that everything should be mentioned in the constitution for us to be satisfied is wrong."



Kenyan woman

COURTESY OF BAPTIST PRESS

Eritrea: violent persecution of Protestants

Elizabeth Kendal

AUSTRALIA (ANS) — Eritrea lies along the west coast of the Red Sea on the horn of Africa. Its population is almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians, with the overwhelming majority of Christians being Eritrean Orthodox. In its efforts to counter 'extremism' the government watches Islamic groups and Christian evangelical groups closely. In the past five years, an evangelical renewal movement has blossomed from within the Orthodox Church. Independent evangelical and Pentecostal churches have grown and sprung up across Eritrea.

In May 2002, the Eritrean government closed all churches that were not part of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Mekane Yesus (Evangelical Lutheran) denominations. Some 20,000 believers have been affected by these closures, but worse was yet to come. Compass Direct has released a report that details the appalling persecution of evangelical Protestants during February and March 2003. The persecution includes harassment, imprisonment, humiliation, beatings, torture and threat of execution. Whole congregations have been subjected to this cruel and degrading treatment as punishment for following 'a new religion.'

In one case, the choir of the Philadelphia Church were meeting for practice and Bible study when 15 police with machine guns arrested all 40 people present (children included). When their pastor came to the prison to enquire about them, he was arrested and later taken into the prison courtyard and humiliated and tortured in front of his congregation.

In another incident, 72 worshippers from across three congregations were arrested, taken to a military prison and locked in metal container cells in appalling, unsanitary conditions for 15 days. They were bailed with the warning to never meet together or try to evangelize anyone ever again. In total, 170 Protestants were jailed and punished for up to 15 days, in February and March 2003.

Compass also revealed that 74 soldiers who had become Pentecostals were arrested in a sweep of the military 13 months ago. According to Compass they have been in a military prison ever since, suffering beatings, deprivations and appalling conditions aimed at forcing them to deny their faith.

In Sept. 2001 the Eritrean government shut down all private media and arrested the most significant government critics. Foreign journalists cannot operate freely in Eritrea either. Believers are risking their lives by getting this information out. They clearly fear the price of silence could be higher than the price of speaking out. They desperately need our prayers.

Elizabeth Kendal is a researcher and writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission

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Humor

Building Maranatha Church - with crooked nails and wrinkles

Harry der Nederlanden

This summer, Maranatha CRC in Beverly, Alberta (now a suburb of Edmonton) is celebrating its 50th anniversary. My parents were charter members, and I am a child of that community. Here's my tribute.

When you think about it, it's quite a wonderful thing that all those feuding Dutchmen – from Friesland, Gelderland, Groningen and Hillegom – should cross the wide Atlantic and most of this vast continent to get together to build a church in Beverly, Alberta. It's a foretaste of God's gathering the nations from the far corners of the earth into one congregation.

It's all the more remarkable when you consider that Edmontonians, the voice of high culture in the West, called Beverly a mudhole. An unfair charge, of course. It was only a mudhole after it rained.

There you'd be on 101st avenue downtown, on your way from Eaton's to Army & Navy to compare prices, lumbering along in rubber boots caked with mud that had climbed up along the inside of your legs onto your pants, and you'd hear somebody say, "He must be from Beverly." Yes, us Beverly pioneers knew what it was to be despised and rejected in those days, like the Psalmist says, but we knew how to get even. Wait till the hockey season....

I was 9 years old when our parents started talking about building a church in Beverly. Us kids couldn't understand why our parents wanted to do such a thing. We liked it fine when we met in the movie theater. The seats were padded, and if you were lucky you could pick up popcorn off the floor. After the service, us boys would always check out the garbage can in the back. If no one had burned it (people burnt their trash every few days then), sometimes we'd find frames of film that had been snipped from the last movie. Some vividly illustrated sermons about Sodom and Gomorrah, our favorite theme.

I could understand why our parents didn't want to meet in the Slovak Hall, where we met before renting the movie theater. They were just looking out for us kids. Weddings and other bashes often went till way past midnight Saturday in the Slovak Hall. When we came to church Sunday morning, the wooden floor was soaked with beer, and us kids got so high on the fumes we were almost becoming Pentecostals – high on spirits. One Sunday, one of the homemade benches collapsed in the middle of the service and we almost lost our entire Young People's Society to the Holy Rollers. Yes, our parents had to guard against heresy.

Leaping dominees

The Slovak Hall even had an insidious effect on preachers (Our parents called them "dommy-neighs" [dominees]; I think it had something to do with their voices.)

The consistory would meet in the coat room near the entrance and then walk to the front in a row behind the dominee, who was usually an American import. (Us kids understood about American imports, because the best players with the Edmonton Eskimos – Jackie

Parker and Johnny Bright – were imports.)

I can still see the dominee and the elders come marching down the narrow aisle through the crowded hall toward the stage where the pulpit stood: a troop of dignified Mannenbroeders in their Sunday best, led by a tall, straight-backed dominee with silver hair, the oldest man in the building by far. When the dominee reached the front of the church, he stopped. He looked right and then left. He didn't scratch his head, but I knew he wanted to.

There were no steps leading up to the stage, and no one had told him he had to make a short detour through a side door. But maybe

where out of sight from the rest of us. Then, after the suspense had built up and everything was quiet as a funeral parlor, the entire team would enter in a quick march. When they got to the front of the church, the line would split in two directions, but with a quick handshake they'd send their best man down the middle, straight to the pulpit. The elders and deacons would then take their seats in the front, where they could stare and scowl at the congregation. Peter, my friend, insisted that they took attendance, and if you missed, next week you'd have to face your elder's withering glare.

It was very effective. Very few people



Beverly Church in Alberta built on mud.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHURCH FILES

Americans didn't like detours. I know Johnny Bright didn't; he always went right up the middle. And that's what this preacher did. Rearing back, he gathered himself, took a short run and made a flying leap for the pulpit. His foot snagged and for a moment it looked as if it might turn into a belly-flop. But with some quick footwork, he caught himself on the edge of the pulpit, and a huge sigh and murmur went up from the congregation. Some suspected he had been dancing.

Yes, those were the days. The drama was almost as intense as watching Elvis Stoyko try for one of his medal-winning jumps – and it was in church! We were already looking forward to next week, when the preacher would be a short, fat fellow. From The Netherlands. What were the odds he'd make it without picking up some splinters?

The face of discipline

What decided the move from the Slovak Hall, I'm convinced, was our Reformed ecclesiology. (That's our theory of church.) But it specifically had to do with church polity. (That's how the church is governed.) In the Reformed churches of that day, the consistory had real clout. Them elders knew how to put the fear of God into the congregation. On Sunday, first they'd plan things some-

missed in those days.

But this was definitely not the way church government worked in the Slovak Hall. Since there wasn't enough seating space, a bench was rigged up in front of the stage. It was little more than a wide board, really, and the front of the stage was the backrest. That's where all the young kids sat, packed shoulder to shoulder, facing the congregation. The text comes to mind, "And a young child shall lead them." Instead of facing the stern stares of the consistory, the Beverly congregation, gathered from the Calvinist corners of The Netherlands, sat facing the fresh-faced grins and innocent blue eyes of their children.

What would that lead to? A recipe for liberalism.

It didn't take long for those Calvinist elders to catch on that the face being reflected back to the congregation might be undermining discipline. In those days consistory meetings weren't the wimpy affairs they are now. They'd often go way past midnight. There was deep thinking and clouds of cigar smoke. Rigorous Calvinist-Kuyperian thought was sustained by the fragrance and smoke of Ritmeester cigars. Sometimes after a church service, us kids would sneak into the consistory room and take a deep sniff of the fragrance of holiness. Cigars were especially well-suited to long

consistory meetings.

Remember, this was a time when most men worked six days a week, and since few owned their own cars, they often spent two hours a day on the bus. The Beverly bus took you to the Bus Depot behind Eaton's, and then you had to catch the City bus top get to where you worked. Not that the bus travel was completely wasted. You'd always pick up a few words of Ukrainian on the way downtown. That was almost like doing evangelism. Especially if you taught a few words of Dutch to a Ukrainian.

The vaadoek

Anyway, those consistory meetings where they debated the effect of having children instead of the consistory up front went so late that when the elders and deacons got home, their wives smacked them with the vaadoek [dishrag]. The vaadoek was a smelly rag found in every Dutch kitchen for wiping up spills, whether from the table or the floor, and for wiping jam off kids' chins. [It was usually strawberry jam, which came in huge tins. The Dutch immigrants saw it as confirmation that they'd reached the Promised Land and us kids were allowed to spread it liberally – as long as we topped it off with another slice of bread.] Back to the vaadoek: it symbolized the rule of woman over the household. Male headship had limits. That limit was set by the vaadoek.

When the office-bearers came together next time, their ears were still stinging from the snap of the vaadoek and the smell still lingered on the collars of their consistory suits. They knew that something had to be done to reestablish good order. Having those kiddie faces grinning back at the congregation was undermining the order of church and home.

That's when they started talking about building their own church, one in which the elders and deacons could sit up front and there wouldn't be all that grinning to deal with.

The beginning: the big hole

Some of you may be wondering why Maranatha church was built at the present location, because there were plenty of vacant lots in Beverly in those days. Most of Beverly was vacant lots. In fact, us kids really didn't even think of them as lots until people started dividing up the fields and woods we played in and putting For Sale signs on them. It seemed like a violation of our rights. Suddenly one day the fields you used to cut across with your friends or the bushes where you used to build your forts and make little fires were staked out. It didn't do any good to pull the stakes out either. After a few weeks, a big hole would appear in the ground and you'd play on the dirt hills for a couple of weeks, pelting your enemies with clods of dirt. But then slowly but surely a house would start to grow up out of the hole and, when you came to play, carpenters would chase you off threatening to cut off your legs if they caught you.

The hole that appeared here on the corner of 47th street and 119th avenue was unusually large, much too large for a house. So we weren't at all surprised when what sprouted up out of it wasn't a house but a church. After all, it was

See *Building Maranatha* page 19...

Senior Care

Of leadership, legacies, hockey pucks and C. S. Lewis' wardrobe



The historic J. R. Booth mansion now a Laurentian Leadership Centre

Arlene Van Hove

"...The Canada of his old age was a much-changed country from the Canada of his youth..." **Rt. Hon. Arthur Meigen at J.R. Booth's death**

The century old mansion is built of sturdy red brick featuring an enormous tower and a collection of gables and chimneys as well as a grand stone entrance. I wonder how many years it has been since the halls of this heritage home have heard the gleeful laughter of children. Yet, it sounds normal and natural as I watch my two grandchildren scamper up the wide and spacious staircase and peer quizzically through the thick stained glass windows at the top of the second landing.

A house of opportunities

To the children, this house is full of exciting nooks and crannies just waiting to be discovered.

To us, the house is spacious and solid and an officially recognized 16,000 feet heritage building by the City of Ottawa in 1980. To the children, the house will have secret staircases leading to all kinds of imaginary friends and activities. To us, the house has a grand staircase, stained windows and extra-ordinary ornate wood moldings and exposed beams. To the children, this house has all the intrigue of C. S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." To us this house gives Trinity Western, a British Columbia university, the opportunity to work out Lewis' metaphorical analogies that Christ is King in all areas of life.

While the stories of the children around the enjoyment of this house may be vastly different from the adults, both generations are equally taken with its impressive historical ambience and feel honored to be its house guests for a few days.

The story behind 252 Metcalfe Street

John Rudolphus Booth was born in 1827 in a farmhouse in Quebec to John and Eleanor Booth, immigrants from Ireland. He was educated at a local county and apprenticed as a carpenter. In 1854 he arrived in Ottawa with his wife Rosalinda and a young daughter. With great ingenuity, Booth was able in four years, to lease a sawmill and secure a lumber contract for the soon-to-be-built Parliament Buildings. He quickly established himself as the largest timber owner in the British empire, acquiring title to four thousand square miles of forest in Ontario and Quebec. In 1879, he diversified into the railway industry, gaining control of the Canada Atlantic Railway Company. Booth became Ottawa's largest private employer.

J. R. Booth was also a lifelong Presbyterian and a private man who shunned the limelight. Yet, he was a man of habit, determination and resourcefulness as well as an innovative entrepreneurial businessman. He was generous but stern with his workers, believing he knew what was good for them. At the same time he loved flowers and would never miss a flower show.

Booth was not immune to the difficulties of life and he experienced his share of personal sorrows and business setbacks. He, however, continued to be involved in business, church and Ottawa life throughout his old age. On a rare public occasion a few days before his 93rd birthday, Booth attended a Stanley Cup hockey match between the local team and the Seattle



Van Hove's granddaughter on the staircase.

An architectural and historical legacy

The exquisite late Victorian home was built by John R. Booth in 1909. He lived there until he died at the age of 98 in 1925. In 1947 his children sold the house to the prestigious Laurentian Club of Ottawa on the condition they would retain the integrity of the house. In 2002 the Laurentian Club in turn sold the house to Trinity Western University with a similar understanding about maintaining its architectural and historical value. That Fall Trinity Western opened the renewed and revamped Laurentian Leadership Centre, with its historical integrity intact, and enticed 21 students to roam its halls and become part of the history.



Van Hove's granddaughter peers into a room at 252 Metcalfe.

Puckchasers of the Pacific Coast League. Booth was escorted to the centre of the rink by his grandson, J. R. Booth Jr., where he threw the puck for the opening face-off. The veteran lumber king got a tremendous ovation from the 7,000 fans, and the Ottawa club presented him with a large floral horseshoe!

Leaders in the service of the Lion King

In C. S. Lewis' book "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," the Lion is the metaphorical Jesus who conquers evil and brings the good news. The Laurentian Centre is dedicated to putting this good news into action.

And so, to the Booth family as well as to the Laurentian Club the house is a legacy passed down to be used with respect and integrity. To the visionary leaders of Trinity Western University the house allows them a facility to train Christian students to be leaders of integrity in government, business, media and international organizations. To the students the house offers them an opportunity to live, to learn and to intern in government or private business offices around the city of Ottawa. To the children at this point in time, the house continues to hold ongoing possibilities of secret staircases and mystical wardrobes. But in the future it will offer them opportunities to learn about leadership that will encourage them to be true to their faith and values as well as contribute, like all those who have gone before them, to the growth and development of Canada.

Arts

Dan Steven: a living prophet in a dying age

Dan Steven, *Voices from God*

Independent release of To the Moon Productions, 200332
McKinnon Dr., Chatham, Ont. N7M 1B4www.odbaby.com

Produced, Recorded and Mixed by Dan Steven and David Ciccarelli at The Flying Disk, London, Ontario, and Douglas Romanow, Fire Escape Recording, Toronto, Ontario, 2002.

Reviewed by Brian J. Walsh, Christian Reformed Campus Minister to the University of Toronto.

Here's the biblical angle on idolatry: it is rooted in forgetfulness, preoccupied with security, and is severely lacking in vision. In other words, idolatry forgets both God and our calling as human beings created in the divine image, grasps security through our own self-protective powers, and renders us so shortsighted that we can't see beyond the end of our own noses. Amnesia, self-achieved security and limited vision - these are the hallmarks of an idolatrous culture such as our own.

In Dan Steven's second album, *Voices from God*, the artist counsels memory, letting go and a vision that can see beyond the sky. Remembering, relinquishment and vision - this is the stuff of prophecy. And when that prophecy is spoken in the face of death and hopelessness, it breaks through with comforting and radical hope.

Remembering

Consider these lines from one of the strongest tracks on the album - "A Dying Age:"

I was in a hole and I saw hope
I was way way down
and got thrown a rope
I will sing of nothing but holiness

So far, sounds like a psalm doesn't it? The only appropriate response to an experience of redemption, an experience of being lifted up from the pit, is to sing of the holiness of one's redeemer. But read on,

Changes everywhere,
all around, in the air
The more that I stop holding on
the more that I am free

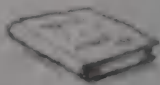
What do you do when all the world is incessantly changing, when there is no point of orientation left, when the very air is filled with uncertainty and confusion? Why, you hang on for dear life, of course.

Isn't that what all of us do? Don't we grab on to whatever secure anchor we can find and hang on?

Not Dan Steven. No, he has come to a deeper understanding that the more he stops holding on, the more free he is. Only in loosening his grip, letting go, relinquishing all that gives false security in a world of change, does Dan Steven experience freedom - whoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.

But who is this artist? In what voice are we being addressed? The song continues:

A living prophet in a dying age
World spins round caught in a cage
It's closed the book
and forgotten the page
And I, I stay here to remember
I stay here to remember



The artist has the audacity to speak to us in the voice of a prophet who discerns that ours is a dying age and that all the fast-paced spinning of this ever-changing world happens in a cage, in captivity born of amnesia. It's closed the book and forgotten the page - closed the revelatory book that tells us where we have come from, who we are and where we are going



HARRY DERNERLAND ILLUSTRATION

- and forgotten how to open it again. And in the face of that kind of devastating and death-dealing forgetfulness, the artist - the prophet - will "stay here to remember."

In a synthetic "world overcome, overtaken by rage," where "no one stops for the fallen" - a world of violence and war, death and hard-heartedness - the prophet remembers the one who bore that rage and who reached out to the lost and rejected. And because the artist remembers, he has a vision beyond the present calamity, beyond the present dying age.

Yeah, I believe in the world to come
I believe that it shall soon be begun
I believe in the world to come
Soon I'll be on my way

Memory, letting go, and vision - these three make for prophecy. And this album is deeply prophetic.

While *Voices from God* is ultimately all about hope and resurrection, the artist refuses to avert his gaze from the realities of despair and death.

In "Strangers and Angels" Steven paints a picture of confusion and being "lost in the haze."

My mind is torn and my teeth are torn
And my body needs to be cleaned
My bones are bruised
And my heart is sweating
bullets of memory
Bullets of memory
These are broken memories, memories of what once was
but is no longer.
Once when I was younger, smarter, more alive. This field
seemed to hold
more flowers
I stop to stare and I can't count five

A broken, bruised body, losing grip on life, finds its correspondence in a dying world where fields once were abloom with flowers but are now desolate.

But where can there be hope in the face of such death? In such a desolation - both personal and creational - what is left to remember? And who will do the remembering? Might not amnesia be the better option? Just forget it all and in that forgetting allow all of this brokenness to disappear into oblivion?

No, says Dan Steven. He won't let go of memory and he continues to weave the theme throughout the album. Still with "Strangers and Angels," at one point he sings, "And let the

sky alone remember me," but he will conclude the song with, "And let the silence remember me/ Let it remember me." The silence that is left when the artist's voice is no more - even this silence has a memory, perhaps the memory of the artist's voice and images echoing after he is gone, perhaps just the silence that is left after there is nothing left to say.

Even in the silence, then, there is memory. The artist calls us in another song to "remember the dream" because without such memory we run the risk of losing it all, or losing all dreams, and therefore, all hope.

Letting Go

But who is the author of this dream? If we abandon idols as the source of our security, to whom do we turn? The prophets know the answer to this question, and so does Dan Steven. In "Lightning" he sings,

Your voice
is all that I need to know
Your voice
is all that I need to teach me to let go
All that I need to remember myself

Dan Steven hears voices, and if you listen closely, you too will hear voices as you listen to this album, *Voices from God*. And when you hear that voice, the artist confesses, then you will hear all that you will need to teach you to let go.

Now here is a piece of wisdom that the world does not have: only in letting go, that is by relinquishing your need to control your life, will you find your life. In relinquishment we are remembered. Listening to the voice of the one who made us, we learn to surrender and trust our God with everything, even our very identities.

Voices from God is about prophetic memory, but it is also about letting go. Whether we are talking about images of release in songs like "Jordan" ["Oh, Giver, Giver of Love/ Breathe into me/ O Giver, Giver of Love/Release me"] and "Walk My Way" ["out past the concrete groans/ I'm running the rhythm to let your love/ release me"], or the hope that "in love, we will fade, fade away" in "Until That Final Day," the album is suffused with a sense of relinquishment.

Striving for self-protective control over one's life is a path of hopelessness and death, proclaims this artist. And he wants to point us to a path of hope and new life.

And it is important to remember that Christian relinquishment is born not out of despair for meaning in this world, but out of hope. In his evocative song "Waiting for the Resurrection," Steven sings that at university he was "learning to be lost/ And to be alright with it." He could let go of control over life and not sweat it. Why?

'Cause the January glass blades
have a funny way
Of blooming on their own if you only
learn to go with it

You see his point? You can afford to risk letting it all go if you know that resurrection is at the very heart of creation. You can relinquish control because somehow even in the depths of our cultural and spiritual winter, glass blades still have a funny way of blooming on their own, without our intervention. But to believe that requires a vision that goes beyond the horizons of this world.

Vision

In a world of death, mourning and tears, Dan Steven opens this album with these lines:

Baby wipe your tears away
Spring is here; it's a sunny day.
Now's the time to be in love
Quit your worries, quit your crying.
We're going kite flying
We're going kite flying

Arts/Family

"Kite-Flying" sets the tone for the whole album and introduces a metaphor that will recur throughout - the sky.

If I had my way
We would be here forever
We would melt away with this song
into the sky
If I had my way right now
right here together
We would teach ourselves to fly

Sky and flying appear on this album as metaphors for gaining a perspective beyond the horizons of this world. In "Lightning" the image of sky is brought together with the theme of relinquishment:

Standing at the intersection,
serenity surrender as I look up and
I'm ready to fly straight into the sky

But this is no escapist spirituality. The issue isn't to fly into the sky in order to avoid the pain of the world. Rather, the sky functions as an image of eternity, a place of divine perspective and vision of transformation. As such, the sky is a metaphor to set our imaginations free from the captivity of the dominant imagination.

In "Africa" the artist tells us that he is "tired of these same old streets," "tired of the excuses to lose the faith," and that he is tired of the "white picket fence" of suburban boredom. Most importantly, he is tired of this world of decay and death. So he sings,

And flesh and blood may pass away
Bones and mud ain't nothing
but a body
Flesh and blood they may decay
But the sky, yeah the sky
it stretches forever

But this is not simply a matter of contrasting eternal life with the decaying world of our temporal existence. No, there is something more radical going on here. The artist sings on,

Take me to where I can believe
In the rhythm of the heart
And the pulse of the sun
Take me to where I can believe
In the soul of a man
Not the wars that he's won
Take me to where I can believe in the
Minds that aren't clouded by gain

The sky - functioning here as a metaphor for the Kingdom of God - stretches on forever, while the kingdoms of this world - the kingdoms of imperial violence and market profiteering - will pass away. But you need to have this vision of the sky, this vision of the Kingdom, this vision that transcends the horizons of this world, if you are to be set free from the constrictive imagination of our culture.

The world of gain and war is a world of division and exclusion. In this world there are winners and losers, insiders and outsiders. Dan Steven employs the metaphor of the sky to evoke an alternative vision. In "Until That Final Day," he sings,

O arise, arise
Kiss the heights of the highest skies
Where all reunite in the flame
In this vision,
Yes in time, in time
We will all be unified
Yes, we all will be one, once again

Celebrating the ordinary

Life has its glorious moments. Within the last six weeks Jack and I have attended a couple of weddings, a 25th wedding anniversary, the significant birthdays of two of his cousins, and the college graduation of our daughter, Stephanie. Each event gathered family and friends together into a unique celebration. Over the past little while it occurred to me that what we actually celebrate is the very ordinary days and moments of our lives.

Both weddings featured beaming bridal couples, accompanied by smiling friends and proud parents. When I'm at a wedding, it's the little things that are apt to bring a tear to my eye. During wedding reception number one, we laughed continuously as the groom's brother and numerous friends recalled their adventures while growing up together. At the end of the evening, our friend, the groom's dad, stood by the microphone and welcomed his new daughter-in-law into the family. Listening to his poignant speech about the blessings of day to day family life and the goodness of God's love touched my heart in a way that only a parent could understand.

A few weeks later we were at another wedding. I watched the groom escort his mother down the aisle before the ceremony. Most of the time when I see him, he's wearing faded work jeans and a favorite ball cap. On this day, of course, he was scrubbed and handsome in his suit and tie. His mom looked lovely too. At the front of the church she reached up to give her boy a hug. He kissed her forehead. My eyes welled up unexpectedly, as I thought of all the routine mother-son moments that had led up to this particular time.

When he stood next to his bride, my mind wandered back to the 25th anniversary we had attended the night before. John and Irma had stood side by side as well, for a quarter century already. And we celebrated with them by listening to stories from their parents, siblings and children gleaned from all the routine days that now amounted to a silver anniversary.

If such a longing for unity in a world of war, enmity and exclusion doesn't beat in your heart, don't listen to this album. You simply won't understand what this young man is singing about.

A Living Prophet in a Dying Age

The final production of *Voices from God* was completed in the early hours of December 6, 2002. A few hours later Dan Steven died of brain cancer, surrounded by his family in London.

The concluding track on *Voices of God* is "Plane to Jerusalem." After singing the bridge, "Please don't be long, my God/ waiting for me," Dan concludes the album with these lines:



Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Then just this past weekend I noticed my heart swell as the organist began to play *Pomp and Circumstance*, while the graduates filed into the auditorium. There stood my oldest daughter in cap and gown, up on the stage, reaping the rewards for a job well done.

Three short years ago I dropped her off at a campus only an hour away from our house and wondered how I would even survive the first week without her at home.

Meanwhile, she also wondered how she'd survive. When the first midterm crunch came, she questioned whether she'd be able to manage all the papers, exams and reading required of her just to get through the first semester. But she did. And little by little, one assignment at a time, one course at a time, have totaled up to a bachelor's degree.

Most of the people Stephanie loves were able to be there with her this last Saturday. We all beamed with pride as she took her place in the graduating class of 2003.

So today it's back to the real world. It's a run-of-the mill day. There's laundry to do, a column to write (late as usual!) and meals to prepare. I can only afford a few minutes to ponder the high moments I've experienced lately, and then I've got to get on with the day to day routine. But there's a joy in my heart that reminds me to take life one step at a time.



And when this life is over, I'll stand in the presence of my Maker. Together we'll celebrate the ordinary moments of the past, while looking ahead to a glorious eternity.

Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in Harriston, Ontario

So if you don't see me tomorrow
Don't be waiting around for me
I will be oceans away playing music
On a corner of a
Middle Eastern street
Because I found me a plane to Jerusalem
Going down to Calvary's tree
And I'll sing to the sands
of the Holy Land
Till the prophets start speaking to me.

While Dan wrote confidently of "waiting for the resurrection," he knew that there could be no prophetic voice, indeed no "voices from God" apart from a trip to Calvary. It is on the cross that God speaks most painfully and most eloquently. The prophets have indeed spoken to Dan Steven. And in his voice they have spoken to us.

Dan Steven - December 24, 1976 - December 6, 2002 - a living prophet in a dying age.

Christian Living

Why go to church? 20

To get back in tune

A. A. van Ruler

This time I will begin with an image. Think of what a choir director does before the choir begins to sing. He sounds a few notes on a pitch pipe, and the different voices of the choir sound out their proper notes. The choir members need to find the right pitch before they begin to sing.

It's a good image suggesting why we need to go to church, or at least one of the reasons we go to church. We've looked at quite a number of reasons already. Now we examine another one.

What this image describes is also expressed in the old-fashioned phrase 'the practice of religion.' It's a phrase that has long been tossed aside, but it signals something worthwhile, at least, if we understand it in a certain way.

We can take it to mean 'religious practices' or we can take it to mean 'the practice of serving God.' The first implies religion as something distinct, a separate province in the whole of our existence, namely, the province of inwardness and eternity. This quickly becomes divorced from the rest of our daily lives. One day we go to the bank and the store to go shopping. The next day we go to church to practice our religion. And the two have nothing to do with each other.

That many people experience their lives in this way is undeniable. But this is hardly necessarily so. Dutch Calvinists in the seventeenth century distinguished among navigation (shipping), commerce and religion, but they did not separate them. They tried to weave them together in all sorts of ways. They were, after all, Calvinists.

What about the inner life?

But can religion be wholly absorbed into navigation and commerce? What about the inner life and eternity? Must we not also consciously be busy in this province as well? And then doesn't it then acquire its own form – namely, in religious practices, in worship? And don't these require individual and communal forms of expression?

There are a growing number of people who never go to church but who emphasize that they are nevertheless genuinely religious. They are like people who say they love poetry but never read any. This casts their love somewhat in doubt. True lovers of poetry like to haunt the bookstores. Similarly, genuinely religious people go to church regularly. To go to church is for them to practice their religion.

Nevertheless, the second meaning of the phrase is more attractive – to practice serving God. This is truly a practice, an actual doing, that is, worshipping God. But here I want to

emphasize that the worship service is to practice at serving God.

The difference I'm getting at is the difference between a rehearsal and an actual performance of a choir. Everything is directed toward the day of the performance, but for several months leading up to that day the choir goes through its repertoire to practice, to study, to train. On the day of the performance, the director tunes up the choir by blowing his pitch pipe.

Practice of godliness

What I mean to say is that the worship service has a limited, humble preparatory role in life. It isn't itself our service of God, or in any case it isn't the whole of our service. We serve God in the totality of our existence – or at least we should. This all-encompassing service of God used to be called, to use another old-fashioned phrase, 'the practice of godliness.' It doesn't mean that we have entered into the being or into the life of God himself, far away from the world and daily life. Quite the contrary. It means we find our happiness and fulfilment in the counsel of God and in his expressed will, in his commandments, in his law. That's where we seek to live, where we move and have our being.

The practice of godliness is thus our walk, our fellowship with God. We have fellowship with him in our entire existence, in everything that we experience and do. Our very existence is itself fellowship with God. We serve him in all that we are, in everything we do and in all that we undergo.

This is how we see ourselves when we reflect on things and this is how we experience our selves in our deepest inwardness, in our feelings and in our self-awareness. We allow this fellowship to determine our entire walk and talk.

This fellowship with God is not just a matter of reflection and experience but equally a matter of doing and making. The practice of godliness stylizes or shapes our entire existence; it is genuinely a practice, a praxis. It issues in real deeds.

The practice of godliness is not just a matter of being focused on our own inner selfhood, our own existence. The outside world plays an equally important role. Living a truly godly life means experiencing the whole world as God's world, as his kingdom.

By experiencing the world as the kingdom of God, we are able to bring something of ourselves into the picture. This is the marvelous meaning of the practice of godliness: namely, that our practice helps to make this world into the kingdom of God. This way nothing falls outside it.

On the one hand, there is the



The Excelsis DEO 2000 Baptist Church choir. Van Ruler compares churchgoing to choir members who need to find the right pitch before they begin to sing.

mystical, the inner life, the life of the heart, of the emotions, feelings, moods. God's kingdom is established into the darkest corners of our souls. We (must) serve God in all that transpires within us.

Faith in the public square

On the other hand, there is the political, the public square. It confronts us with the big questions: how shall we govern ourselves, what will be the basic principles and goals of government, what will be the relationship between citizens and the state, between the state and civil society, between authority and freedom? What kind of laws will the government pass to structure our lives? Here we are concerned above all with our life in community in the broadest sense but also with our individual lives.

In all of this the kingdom of God must come to expression. If this does not get political embodiment too, the kingdom gets at most an incomplete and crippled form.

With regard to the state, this raises almost insurmountable difficulties. But when Christianity sidesteps these difficulties and refuses to have anything to do with politics, it becomes a salt without flavor. It denies the Lordship of Christ and thereby Christ himself.

Besides, anyone who thinks that it is more difficult to bring the kingdom of God to expression in the state than to bring one human heart to conversion is out of touch with life. Where did the demons entrench themselves more deeply – in the state or in the human heart? Anyone at all acquainted with his own heart knows the answer to that question.

The whole of life plays itself out between these two extremes of the mystical and the political. The moral life (our relationship to our neighbor and to ourselves), societal life (our relationships within the world of

work), economic life (the production, distribution and consumption of the goods of this earth), cultural life (technology, the sciences, the arts, entertainment and sports) – all these are also part of the kingdom of God or must become so.

Of all these we can only say that for the kingdom of God to achieve any visible expression a great deal remains to be done. The problem is that, from the viewpoint of what A. Kuyper called an architectonic critique, no one seems to know exactly what needs to be done, for no one wants a dictatorship, and righteousness and freedom do not seem to get along very well.

Yes, the practice of godliness puts a lot on our plate. It will keep us occupied till the end of days. There isn't a single situation or relationship in which we can forget the question of the kingdom and the service of God. This occupation with the practice of godliness isn't an unalloyed pleasure. It calls us to impose style on the unruliness of life, to put a rein on the wildness of the heart. It takes considerable taming and training. We call it discipline. It involves putting bonds on life. They can pinch like a tight girdle, but over the long haul they give us the flexibility of an athlete. Once you are used to going about in the harness of the kingdom of God, however, you won't have it any other way. True godliness is already having the fullness of salvation here on earth, at least, in principle.

Liturgy and godliness

What is the relationship between the liturgy of the church and the practice of godliness? I gave the beginning of an answer to this question in the picture of the choir director and his pitch pipe. But this points to only one side of something that has many sides.

Still, we have already established

first of all that God is not just served in the church. We also serve him outside the church – in the world, and in all things. All of life is in essence liturgy, service of God. We may refuse this service or enlist in it, but it is service in the world and in our daily existence. Religion in the sense of serving God can never be purely and solely a separate and unique moment alongside the rest of life.

It has, therefore, also been established that when we go to church we don't step out of the world or out of sin into the sacred, for it is the world that is the sacred. The world is the theatre of God's glory. This is true in a multitude of ways. Among others, because by playing our roles in this theatre we make the glory of God real. All our going and doing is 'living to the greater glory of God.'

Hammering the anvil of revolution

This does not detract from the fact that going to church is part of the practice of godliness; in fact, nowadays it is important to stress this fact. Progressive and radical Christians have become so intoxicated by their discovery of the earth and the world, of social concerns and of helping in developing countries that they've turned everything upside down. They forget the work of prayer and praise, and embittered and emboldened they hammer on the anvil of revolution. There is little left of church or faith for some.

Therefore, we must state emphatically that if we turn our back on the church, eventually there will be little left of the practice of godliness. We cannot stand upright in the world and walk straight in it if we do not go and sit in church at specified times and from there look out over the world and our role in it. The church and the worship service are essential parts of the practice of godliness. They are unique and special forms of it.

But how must we conceive the relationship between the two practices?

Element of concentration

In the first place there is the element of concentration. The liturgy, the worship service gives the practice of godliness more density, richness, opacity. Going to church concentrates the practice of godliness the way steam is condensed into water.

But church-going not only concentrates and condenses, it also gives plastic expression of the practice of godliness. It demonstrates that the totality of life in the world is serving God. This is the essence of life. The liturgy turns this into a separate, unique moment and gives it a special expression.

Christian Living

A playful necessity

Why do we need this separate moment of concentration and expression? Isn't it a replication of what we are already doing? Isn't it superfluous? Yes, in a certain sense the worship service is a luxury, something extra. We come out of a playful necessity. What we live out in our daily lives in the practice of godliness we playfully act out on Sunday in the worship service.

We rise above the bitter seriousness of daily practice and enter into the play of the liturgy. We may, therefore, say that the worship service is the high point of the practice of godliness. Here it does a somersault and comes to its essential expression – the playfulness of the children of God.

We cannot, however, remain in this playfulness for very long. We must also introduce the idea of training. We spoke of the rehearsals of a choir. We might also think of the practice of a football team. We don't go right out and perform or play without practicing. It takes effort and rehearsal.

The same is true of the practice of godliness. It doesn't arise spontaneously. We need to keep making ourselves conscious of the fact that in everything we do in life we are standing before the face of God and called to serve him. In the hurly-burly and hustle and bustle of life, we keep losing sight of that fact. So we go to church to be reminded and to let it soak in.

We are not just forgetful; we are also weak and inept. We can never wholly serve God in all that we do. And we cannot sustain it to the end. It is therefore fortunate that we have this concrete form of remembrance. It is no small thing to get up in time Sunday morning, to leave the house and go to church and to spend an hour or so there being stretched on the exercise bar of the liturgy. It makes our spiritual muscles supple, and gradually we are able to make that splendid pirouette of serving God.

To the ideas of concentration and training we add a third – summed up in the word 'paradigm.' Paradigm means model, pattern, example. This is also what the church service is. The way life appears in the worship service, namely, as praise and service of God is how it should look all across the line. It sets the pattern, the tone.

We need this model because we easily get out of tune. In the world around us there are so many different and even conflicting melodies that are sung, that spiritually speaking it is a hellish cacophony. Who can stay on tune in such an environment? Who can stay on track? This



We don't go to church just as middle class citizens but as knights of the kingdom of God.

is why we need to go to church regularly. There we once again see the lines and the essential meaning of our lives.

This means that the liturgy gets pressed onto the totality of our lives like a template. Our entire existence becomes permeated by the forms of the liturgy. This does not mean that the world needs to be turned into church, although judges and other government officials also perform liturgical acts. Sometimes it is hard to tell where the one ends and the other begins.

Church service is life jacket

From the idea of paradigm, it is only a small step to the idea of the church as the starting point of the practice of godliness. The worship service can be our last anchor in the practice of godliness. We can reach the point where our lives have suffered total shipwreck and that we are in danger of being swallowed up by the storms of life. Then we reach out to cling to the church service as a life jacket. We go to church to begin all over again.

Things can get even worse. They can come to a complete arrest. Our experience of the world as the kingdom of God can become limited entirely to the church. This becomes the only thing left of our practice of godliness, not just for ourselves but also for others. We simply see no other opportunity to bring it to expression and realization anywhere else. Then our faith in God and our willingness to serve him becomes visible only or primarily in going to church on Sunday.

That's awful. And we should not quickly accustom ourselves to this situation. Going to church should be more than a life jacket or a sheltering harbor. It should be a starting point.

It should be the start of something big; it should make all sorts of other things happen. The liturgy gives birth to piety and spirituality, the practice of godliness, the praise and service of God, the experience of the world as the kingdom of God.

A dramatic turn

Here our thought has taken a dramatic turn. To this point our meditations on why we go to church have always taken their start in human life or in the world, in our being as sinners or as believers. The arrow pointed from there to the worship service. The liturgy was seen as the high point of our culture and our humanity.

Now we see that the arrow also points the other way. We can begin with the church and the worship service as the starting point. Then culture and humanity become fruits of the liturgy. To go to church and participate in the worship service is the first form of what the Bible calls confirming our calling and election.

These two directions – from the practice of godliness to the liturgy and vice versa – are – equally essential. There isn't just a relationship between the two but a correlation, a mutual interrelation. They need each other and determine each other.

A genuine correlation is frustrating for our thinking, for it is hard to penetrate. It doesn't seem to matter where you begin. There is no fixed starting point from which everything becomes clear.

Roman Catholicism begins with the liturgy and derives the practice of godliness from that. Calvinism begins from the other end.

Everywhere at same time

This is due to the peculiar nature of the work of the Holy Spirit. For

the Spirit works everywhere at the same time. He embraces the liturgy and the practice of godliness in their mutuality and holds them together. In the force-field of the Spirit there is this permanent back and forth, and in our thinking and doing we must similarly begin at all points simultaneously.

Where in the liturgy do we find this concentration, training, paradigm and starting point of the practice of godliness? In the form of Jesus Christ. We cannot describe the fullness of Christ here, but only sketch it out. We find him in the form of reconciliation and redemption, in the form of justice and love, in the form of grace and forgiveness. In short, in the form of true, restored fellowship. God and man, man and man, people and people, heart and thing, inwardness and outwardness – these all have been united in Christ, in whom dwells the fullness of the godhead. When the godhead and our bodily humanity have been reconciled, then in principle everything has been brought into harmony.

This form of Jesus Christ, who had no beauty or glory, but to whom was given all power in heaven and on earth, is found in the church. It is also, of course, found in the Scriptures and through the Spirit. When these come together, however, the church arises. There is nothing in the church where we don't rediscover this form of Christ.

But his form is a seal that we must stamp on all of life. Our entire existence must be Christianized – the heart as much as the body, society as much as technology, the state as much as the sciences and the arts. The practice of godliness extends even to politics. From the liturgy, the form of Christ is extended to parliament, the cabinet, the legislature, the judiciary, guiding all politicians and government officials.

We don't only find the form of Christ in church, but through him we also find the reality of creation. It became obscured and suppressed by the sins of humanity, by the curse, by the power of demons and the darkness of paganism. It seemed almost to have vanished.

In any case, there isn't a single solitary soul on earth who on his own is able to experience the world for what it is, namely, created reality, the work and possession of the Creator. Everyone distorts it into something else. One person may absolutize it and turn it into a god. Another says that it is meaningless, absurd, worthless and essentially nothingness. In between these two extremes most people stumble around half asleep. They put up with the world, squeezing a bit of happiness and enjoyment out of it. They endure it passively like the animals

do. In any case, they hardly know how to respond to the fundamental questions of life.

Christ again experiences the world as God's world. He stands in the midst of the flowers of the field and the birds of the air. He stands in the midst of us human beings in our lostness and emptiness and unites all in fellowship. In this all he stands before the face of the Father, and all of reality, everything that surrounds him, once again becomes creation, for it is no longer closed up within itself but it is once again open to God, to his will, his counsel and his kingdom.

A brand new reality

This isn't all that we find in Christ, for we also find those things that have been added to creation – sin, reconciliation, redemption, forgiveness, grace and love – in a word: salvation. This has all been added; it is a brand new reality. Through Christ, we not only become fully human, we first of all become Christians. Through him we find not just the world but also the church.

But by means of salvation we also encounter creation. In Christianizing life we are seeking true worldliness. What we find in the end is the world as the kingdom of God and life as the praise and service of God.

All this is brought together in one part of the liturgy – in the reading of the law. It is a shame that this happens only in liturgies in the Reformed tradition. This was started in France by the Huguenots.

We diminish this precious jewel if we understand the law only as the source of our knowledge of our sin and misery, the mirror in which we recognize our imperfections and transgressions. If we see it only as the rule of gratitude, this isn't much better. It seems so middle class: having heard the gospel and received salvation, before returning to our daily lives, we are reminded that we are called to a life of gratitude and that's why we need to take along these rules.

The original Reformed vision saw the law above all as the form of God's kingdom. It, thus, gives the meaning and destination of the world.

Knights of Kingdom of God

Personally, whenever I hear the law read, I feel something of the French court and the world of the knights coming through. We don't go to church just as middle class citizens but as knights of the kingdom of God. We gather as brave knights to once again put ourselves under God's code of honor. This is how the law of God comes to us, at the beginning of the worship service.

Continued on page 16...

Christian Living

Why I still write letters

Didy Prinzen

The other day I came across a time-worn shoe box in my closet, held together with an elastic band. When I opened it, I found a large collection of old letters, some of them dating back as far as the 1940s. And I discovered that these letters represented fragments of nearly every episode of my life. Suddenly I realized that I had come upon my own history, an important link with my past.

My eyes feasted on the stylish and eloquent hand writing of the old school... on the worn and yellowed-with-age envelopes, many of them still carrying their stamps and smelling so deliciously musty... like the smell of old books. Recognizing again each individual's distinctive handwriting made it seem as though I was about to visit with old friends. Before long, I was oblivious to my surroundings and totally caught up in the past!

Memories of liberation

The earliest letters I found were sent to my family while we were still in The Netherlands. They were written by two Canadian soldiers, who after WWII had stayed with us for a while when our village was liberated from German occupation in May 1945. These letters instantly conjured up vivid images of big tanks rolling into our village... of six soldiers sleeping on the floor in our "front room"... of white bread and real butter and chocolate bars... of our gratefulness towards our Canadian liberators... and especially, oh yes, especially that — the exhilaration of being set free from five years of oppression and the celebrations that followed. I found it remarkable that these men, whom we owed so much, wrote to thank us for their stay with us a year later, when they finally had gotten back into civilian life.

There was also a small collection of letters from a couple of Dutch military, pen pals, that reminded me of another war. Right after 1945, our boys had to go and serve in what was then the Dutch East Indies to liberate an extremely poor and disease stricken people

from their oppressors. And we Dutch girls back home would write letters to keep up their morale....

I can still smell those roses

It was when I started another bundle of letters, among the first ones I received in my new country, that I became totally and emotionally submerged in the last few years I spent in my old country. It was as if it had been only yesterday when, at noon, I and my colleagues walked from our place of work to the dike to eat our lunches looking out over the North Sea. And all along the road that led us to that dike roses grew on a high fence, oh, a thousand roses, and I can still smell those roses today.

These colleagues had sent me long letters, the letters I was holding in my hands that day, in which every one, all ten of them, wrote a piece. And as I read their witty letters again, relating incidents in the office, it seemed as though I was once more back in that quaint little harbor town by the sea. I realize now more than I did then what I had left behind in the country of my birth. Those had been the most carefree years of my life.

Memories of beginnings in a new country

But after having indulged myself in these memories, the memories of my job in a new country also emerged. I remembered how, one afternoon in the summer of 1950, when I was walking home after peeling potatoes and setting tables in a hospital kitchen, a beautiful car stopped beside me. An elderly gentleman was at the wheel and a lady sat beside him.

"Would you like a ride?" they asked. Of course, I gladly accepted. While they drove me to the door of our rented house in the country, they asked all kinds of questions. Much to my surprise, they came back that same evening to offer me a job in the office of a canning factory. And soon I was weighing in tomatoes (meeting a lot of farmers in the



Girl Writing, by Jan Vermeer

process, among them quite a few Dutch ones) and doing the payroll for over a hundred people who worked in that factory. All of them seemed to be delighted to have a "blond Dutch girl" hand them their pay envelope on Friday.

Across from the factory was a cafeteria, built by the gentleman I had met at the roadside for his workers, when they had to work during canning season from 7 in the morning till 10 o'clock at night. Here village women served home cooked meals for 30 cents, and I felt myself surrounded by people who made me feel very welcome in a new country.

A long emotional journey

When I finally found myself back in the present, my eyes misty and my fingers caressing old familiar handwriting, it was as though I had been on a long emotional journey. Even though I had known that the box contained nearly all the letters I had received since my teens, I had not known what was in store for me when I opened it. For as letter after letter passed through my hands, they retold the story of my life and also reminded me of things I had long forgotten. They brought not only smiles on my face and tears in my eyes, but had also made me feel and experience once again the love and affection of a long line of people I had once known and loved.

I fear that in the future these, I dare say most valuable of all tangible legacies, our letters, will be sparsely found in our homes. The ones most treasured by me are a couple of letters written by my Dad, who passed away

some 20 years ago. With that in mind, I will continue to hand-write a letter to my children once in a while, hoping that it will find its way, if not into a shoebox, then at least into a small treasure box.

Why go to church? 20

...continued from page 15

For me, the New Testament summary is not expansive enough.

I like to hear the Ten Commandments, the ten words of life. These are characteristically Jewish, even ancient and Eastern, and some things can no longer be applied literally. But it is precisely this Israelitic, non-New Testament quality that makes them so attractive. The reading of the law is the repetition in the Christian worship service of the Jewish feast of the joy of the law. We rejoice because the Lord our God has given us his law, made known his will. Now we know God's purposes for our life and also the goodness of it.

The law is also a form of praise

Seen in this light, the law is also a form of praise. It isn't the only form of praise and it is more than that. But it is also praise.

When we read and hear the law, we are praising God. We praise him for his goodness in giving us his law so that we know good from evil. We praise him for the beauty of his law, of his kingdom and of his being. For as

knights of the kingdom we see the bright lustre of its holiness.

Perhaps we should not just read the law but sing it. The most remarkable thing in the reading, or singing, of the law is this: that as knights of the kingdom we may participate in this praise of God. In this we not only praise God and exalt him, but we also exalt ourselves. To speak with Paul, we boast; in reading the law we show off all the splendor of a life stylized by God, the practice of godliness to which we are called and equipped.

Noblesse oblige: it is a nobility that imposes duties upon us. We must not lower ourselves. The gospel places us in the depths of God's justification, and the law places us on the heights and the fullness of the life of active sanctification. There we behold the transfiguration, the glorification of our total existence.

The vanRuler series "Why go to Church" is now available on our website: www.christiancourier.ca and click on feature articles.

Spring

The water is playfully running through the ditch jumping over rocks and stones creating miniature waterfalls. I see it pick up a leaf that desperately struggles to escape, clinging to a twig resting on a stone for only a few moments but mercilessly again and again the water forces it back into its downward stream, playing a game of cat and mouse. But maybe... this remnant of another year enjoys its final fling with nature because it brings me such unexpected pleasure.

Didy Prinzen

Health/Christian Living

Overcoming challenges of Alzheimer's care-giving



Volunteer with Alzheimer's client

Lisa M. Petsche

Statistics indicate that one in 13 Canadians over age 65 and one in three over 85 has Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia (cognitive loss). Although dementia can affect adults at any time, the risk of getting it increases as one grows older. Currently, more than 50 per cent of Canadians know someone with Alzheimer's disease and almost 25 per cent have an afflicted family member. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease (AD) is devastating for both the victim and his or her loved ones. A variety of emotions victims experience including denial, anxiety, fear, anger and resentment, embarrassment, loneliness, sadness

and despair. Depression is common.

Family and friends provide most of the care that AD sufferers require. Like their loved one, these informal care-givers experience a wide variety of distressing emotions. They are at risk for burnout due to the emotional strain and the physical toll of care-giving.

It is common to feel that no one understands what they and their loved one are going through. Even if friends and relatives have a good understanding of the disease, they may withdraw out of discomfort, fear or a sense of helplessness. Care-givers become isolated because they can't leave the person alone and

therefore don't get out much.

Care-giving tips

If you are a care-giver, you might find the following tips helpful in looking after your loved one.

- To maximize your loved one's independence, simplify tasks and break them down into manageable steps, communicating them one at a time. Demonstration may help.

- Use a low-pitched voice to convey calmness and reassurance. Keep words simple and sentences short. Also keep questions to a minimum and try to avoid open-ended ones. Offer limited choices to allow you loved one some control without overwhelming him.

- Buy clothing that's easy to put on and can be mixed and matched. If your loved one is prone to layering, keep only a few items in his drawer or closet.

- When self-feeding becomes difficult, try adaptive utensils and dishes – found in medical supply stores – and use finger foods as much as possible. If spills are frequent, stick to easy-care clothing and purchase extra tops and pants. Since people with dementia are easily distracted and confused, clear off the table and offer one item at a time.

- Accept that it's impossible to reason with someone who has dementia; this will prevent power struggles that can lead to escalation of unpleasant behaviors. When your loved one is fixated on a certain idea

or activity, try distraction instead of confrontation.

- Use humor to deflect a tense situation.

- Learn to recognize early signs of escalating behavior and be prepared with some calming strategies to head it off – for example, putting on soothing music, giving a massage or serving a favorite snack.

Care for the care-giver

Care-givers also need to take care of themselves. Here are some suggestions on how to do this.

- Educate yourself about the disease and about ways of managing challenging behavior. Share information with family and friends to help them understand, too.

- Don't take upsetting behavior personally. Nuisance behaviors (such as repetitive questioning and hoarding things) and aggression are not intentional, but rather part of the disease. All you can do is learn to manage symptoms to the best of your ability.

- Guard your health and get regular medical checkups.

- Accept the many emotions that surface, cry when you feel the need (it's a good tension release), do something enjoyable each day, and find a way to connect with other care-givers who understand what you're going through. Don't allow yourself

to become isolated.

- Ask for assistance from relatives and friends, and be specific about what you need. Explore community resources that might also be of help (perhaps someone close to you can do this for you), starting with your local chapter of the Alzheimer Society and your area Community Care Access Centre (CCAC).

- Seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed or hopeless, or if you start to fear for your safety or that of your loved one.

At some point care-giving usually becomes too heavy a load for family care-givers. Incontinence, altered sleep-wake patterns, wandering, paranoia and physical aggression are some of the precipitators of admission to a long-term care facility. Often the care-giver reaches a breaking point, either physically or mentally.

Nonetheless, the placement decision is probably one of the most difficult decisions they will ever have to make, and is often followed by feelings of guilt and failure. Support from relatives and friends can go a long way to help them – and the care recipient – through the transition.

Lisa M. Petsche is a geriatric social worker and freelance writer.

Health care: introduce user fees

Ron Gray, National Leader
Christian Heritage Party of
Canada

"OK," said the man at the meeting. "I agree things are going pretty badly under the present government. But what would you do to change it?"

There are a lot of answers to his questions, but, again, I was grateful that he had pointed the conversation in a positive direction. The CHP is the only Federal political party that has affirmed the 'supremacy of God' clause in Canada's constitution. What would that affirmation mean in terms of policies?

One area where Biblical thinking would have an impact would be health care.

The existing health-care system started off as a universal insurance plan, but except for the doctors, it has resulted in a socialized state medical care system. And like socialism in Europe, it's become a cumbersome bureaucracy that doesn't work well for the patients, the professionals, or the public purse. The only real beneficiaries are the unions. That's

why they are the ones opposing any reform of the system. But health care is facing changes that demand reform.

Among those changes are an aging population, and increasingly-expensive diagnostic and therapeutic techniques. These make it important to put more stress on preventive medicine, and to incorporate modest, easily-affordable user fees to prevent abuse.

The Romanow Report mentioned preventive health care – specifically, programs to curb obesity and smoking – but didn't go nearly far enough. Many of the diseases that are crushing the health-care system are significantly caused by bad lifestyle choices – it costs about \$100,000 to care for an AIDS patient from diagnosis to inevitable death, for example. We need educational programs to discourage promiscuity and homosexuality.

Our health care system at present is also required to pay for procedures that cure no known disease, but result in death for half the patients – yes, I'm referring to abortion. In addition, abortion significantly

increases the risk of breast cancer, and results in other serious physical and psychological effects. The maternal death rate from all causes, after an abortion, is twice as high was the death rate after a live birth. What kind of "health care" system subjects its citizens to that kind of risk?

Here's a better plan: let the single-pay public-financed system cover the first \$1,000 of any individual's health care costs in any year, with modest user fees to prevent abuse. Let the individual pay the next \$1,000. Then institute a universal insurance plan to cover catastrophic health-care costs.

No one would be left out of such a system; no one would suffer crushing expenses. The personal responsibility for the second \$1,000 would help to motivate people to adopt healthy lifestyle choices, and a preventative health education information program would tell them how. Doesn't that make more sense than what we're doing?

A SPRINGTIME PRAYER

Ever-renewing and energizing Father,
come, stir in my dormant spiritual limbs.

Wake up my tired prayer.
Revive my weary efforts of care.
Sing hope into my discouragement.

Wash my dusty, drab attitude
with the cleansing rains of your vision.

Go deep to my roots and penetrate my faith
with the vibrancy of your grace.

Shake loose the old leftover oak leaves
of my tenacious ego-centeredness.

Coax joy to sprout from my difficulties.

Warm the buds of my relationships
so they bloom with healthy love.

Clear out my wintered debris
with the warm breeze of your liberating presence.

Nudge me, woo me, entice me, draw me to you.

I give you my trust and my gratitude
as you grace my slowly thawing spirit.

Light-filled Being, my Joy and my Hope,
let the greening in me begin!

By Dave Poland, as adapted from Catholic author Joyce Rupp

Opinion

Memorial Day

Tymen Hofman

Canada and the US share many holidays, like Christmas and Easter, and some secular special days, like Labor Day and Veterans or Armistice Day on November 11. But the US has one major holiday unknown in Canada. It is Memorial Day, celebrated each year on the last Monday of May. It is a day of very broad import and significance, whose nature seems to have altered and grown through the years. Its purpose was to afford an opportunity to remember those whom we loved and respected but who have passed from this earthly scene to their eternal reward. It was a time to honor the dead. As such it was a very personal occasion to recall to memory the family members and friends whose departure had left a void in the fellowship.



Memorial Day Service

CELEBRATIONS PHOTO

The most tangible aspect of Memorial Day for many people was to visit the graves of loved ones, to place flowers or plants and to take care of any special maintenance that might be required, so that the final resting place of those held dear would give evidence of family love and respect. And the day would give time and opportunity to reflect on the life of Grandpa and Grandma, Dad and Mother, or brother or sister, aunt or uncle. It was a time to remember and give thanks to God for those so instrumental in giving us the gift of life. It was to reflect as well the source of our life in the fellowship of the church and the kingdom of God, to rejoice in all the saints who from their labor rest. It was a time to remember the tremendous debt of gratitude we owe to those who went before us in life and in the church of Jesus Christ. That is still the nature of Memorial Day.

This remembrance automatically included those who had given their lives in war, in the defense of the nation. With the huge number of casualties in the 20th century wars, most families had someone to remember on that day. Most everyone could recall a schoolmate who went to war and did not return to his dear ones. So by its very nature, Memorial Day began to assume an aspect of Armistice Day, with a certain loss of significance of the latter in the US. Now, with the growing emphasis on the war dead of the nation, America's Memorial Day is losing some of its focus on other loved ones who have gone before us. With television's focus on the sacrifice of those who gave their lives in war, the whole emphasis of the day is swinging in that direction. More and more the memory of saints and ancestors is in the background and November 11 recedes in significance in the national memory of the fallen military.

This is very evident to anyone who can recall the fine Armistice Day services held in Canada every year, with everyone wearing the memorial red poppy for a week before that day. I distinctly remember learning the

beautiful tribute to the fallen, and have tried to teach it to our sons. If I recall it correctly, it is as follows:

In Flanders field the poppies grow,
between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place.
And in the sky, the larks, still bravely singing, fly.
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago we lived,
felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved.
But now we lie, in Flanders field.

Throw out our challenge to the foe!
To you from failing hands we throw the torch,
be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep,
though poppies grow, in Flanders field.

And who could forget the beautiful trumpets in the Jubilee Auditorium in Calgary leading the military participants in the service.

So both in Canada and here in the US the honoring of those who died in war is heartening and edifying. What we do need is greater appreciation for those who are disabled and live their lives in veterans hospitals, many of them unable to walk or engage in any meaningful activity. They are often the living dead, forgotten, while we, the hale and hearty, are able to pursue our lives in peace and plenty because of the sacrifice of those brave souls.

However, we are not doing as well in honoring the saints of family life and of life in the kingdom of God. Honoring the memory of those who have gone before us requires that we know those saints and why we remember them. We cannot remember the saints if we are ignorant of their lives. And I do not recommend that Canada adopt Memorial Day as one of its official holidays to help us remember. After all, we can't do away with the Queen's birthday! And setting aside a Memorial Day does little to create a meaningful and honorable remembrance unless we take the story of the saints seriously. But the need for such a time remains.

Memorial is all about history — family stories and tales of church life in days gone by. Memorial is finding a good book and breaking it open and building up our minds and hearts, recognizing and recalling the service of the saints who blessed our lives.

It also means writing a good book to pass on to another generation.

And we ought to think of new and creative ways of bringing the lives of the faithful into clear focus in our families and communities. Many churches have chosen to hang a photo of each of their former ministers. A fine idea, of course, but where are the photos of the important elders, deacons and other leaders whose work graced the life of the congregation? Let's remember them all and give thanks!

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.



*Jesus Christ came to tell men
that they have no enemies
but themselves.
... Blaise Pascal*



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Building Maranatha

...continued from p.10

a lousy location for a store. All of those were on 118th avenue.

There weren't a lot of other churches in Beverly at the time: a little wooden United Church along 118th avenue in the vicinity of 42nd street and an even smaller Gospel Lighthouse along 118th avenue near 37th street. When the huge arches arrived for our church, us kids right away saw that we were going to have the tallest church in Beverly. We went from being a small minority of Dutch immigrants dodging rocks hurled at us by the Ukrainians and other uncivilized peoples who had settled in Beverly before us to a group with status. Not only did we have a tall building, it even had a steeple with a rooster and a bell.

Of course, first those monstrous beams didn't tower; they lay flat. My mother was quite sure that somebody would get killed setting those heavy arches upright, and I could tell she'd selected my dad for the role. But we were lucky. Quite a number of men in the congregation were unemployed at the time, so there was plenty of help around. It must have been close to Christmas when the wooden arches were raised, for I remember a small Christmas tree nailed to top of one of them. When a couple of the arches toppled in a windstorm, one dour fellow saw the judgment of God in it. After all, a Christmas tree was a pa-

gan symbol. Orthodox Calvinists in his part of The Netherlands didn't believe in Christmas trees. Next thing you'd be having candles like the Catholics.

Crooked nails, wrinkled plaster

I helped build Maranatha Church. I didn't actually pound any nails into the building. But a lot of the men helping weren't carpenters, so they bent a lot of nails, and Dutchmen don't like waste. So a few of us kids were set busy making straight what once was crooked. Thereafter, every time we sang the hymn, "Make ye straight what once was crooked," I thought of all those nails I'd hammered straight so they could be used to hold this church together, and I felt that I'd been obedient to the biblical injunction.

My dad always sat in the same place in church. We went to church a half hour before it started just so he'd be sure to get his seat. The choice of seat seemed arbitrary to me until early one Sunday morning—we were almost the first in church—my dad pointed up straight overhead to the vaulted ceiling. He pointed to a spot high up where the plaster was rippled. "See that?" he asked, screwing my head around. "I did that. I could hardly reach it from the scaffold. That's why it's so wrinkled." And he grinned.

He liked the fact that he'd put a

few wrinkles in Maranatha Church. Maranatha Church was in many ways a model to me as I grew up. It was a building built by the members themselves at a time when they could ill afford it. And each of them put a few wrinkles in it.

When we raised our prayers and songs to God every Sunday, they had to make their way through an imperfect structure. Whenever I looked up to God in church (to ask when the dominee was going to say "Amen!"), interposed between my heavenly Father and me was the shaky handiwork of my earthly father, who mounted a high scaffold and risked his neck to do a job for which he'd had no qualifications.

In spite of the wrinkles on the ceiling, I always figured that, after he'd pulled up Maranatha Church out of that big hole in that mudhole called Beverly, God chuckled to himself.

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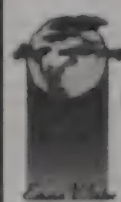
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Classifieds

Classified Rates	Birthday	Anniversaries
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Isaiah 25:1,9</p> <p>It is with great joy and thankfulness to God that we announce the 90th Birthday of our mother, oma and great-oma.</p>  <p>Jean (Jantje) Vanderhill</p> <p>With all our love from your children Gerry & Ronald Fisher - Trenton Robert & Inez - London Diane & George Roorda - Tallahassee, Florida Herman & Ina - London Jerry - Sarnia 17 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren</p> <p>OPEN HOUSE will be held on Saturday, May 24th, 2003 between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. at Westmont CRC. Best wishes only. Home address: 43 Clarence St Strathroy ON N7G 1H2</p>  <p>Thys Rumph</p> <p>widower of Annigje (Drost) will celebrate his 90th Birthday. The Lord willing on May 22, 2003. He resides at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton where an Open House will be held for him on May 22, at 2-4 p.m.</p> <p>An Open House will also be held at the Calvin Christian School, Drayton Ont., on May 24, 2003 at 1:30 - 4 p.m. The children are: Hank & Grace Rumph Pat & Bill Hessels Hilbert & Jannie Rumph Luke & Mia Rumph Hilly & Bill Weimers Hellen & Menno Van derVenne Albert & Martha Rumph Anne & Larry Brouwer They along with 37 grandchildren and 57 great-grandchildren give thanks to God for his long life and good health.</p>	65th Anniversary PIETER and SUZANNA DEKOTER celebrated 65 years of God's blessing as husband and wife on May 4th, 2003. Joining in praise and thanksgiving are their children: Larry & Willy DeKoter Tony & Mary DeKoter Gremar & Case Van Wyk 17 grandchildren & 9 great-grandchildren. <p>Their wedding text was: "Jesus was also invited." John 2:2a</p> <p>Home address: Apt C 307 Holland Christian Homes 7900 McLaughlin Rd Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p> <p>1968 May 15 2003 Hoogeveen Brownsville</p> <p>"Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8</p> <p>With joy and thanksgiving to God We hope to celebrate our</p>  <p>35th Wedding Anniversary JAAP and JANNY KROONDJIK (nee Mulderij)</p> <p>Rejoicing with us, our children and grandchildren: Andre & Janneke Kroondijk - Tyler, Ryan, Dylan John Bettina & Randy Poortinga - Andy</p> <p>We invite you to celebrate with us Saturday May 17th, 2003, D.V. at Immanuel Christian School 75 Caverly Road, Aylmer, Ontario Open House 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Home address: 163251 Brownsville Rd Brownsville ON N0L 1C0</p> <p>The children and grandchildren of</p> <p>HOMER and BETTY OUDMAN</p> <p>want to congratulate them on their 50th Wedding Anniversary to be celebrated May 15th, 2003. 50 years of loving each other and living together in peace and harmony has been a testimony to God's faithfulness.</p> <p>An Open House will be held in Taber, AB, at the Christian Reformed Church on May 10th from 2 - 4 p.m. Home address: 71 Signature Lane Taber AB T1G 2G8</p> <p>1938 Ryswyk, Holland May 18 Grimsby, Ontario 2003</p> <p>"Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Matthew 19:6b</p>   <p>With thanks to God for His steadfast love and faithfulness we rejoice and celebrate, the Lord willing, with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents their 65 years of marriage.</p> <p>JACOB and NELL VANDENBERG (nee VanLeeuwen)</p> <p>Abe & Liz Vermeer - Grimsby Bill & Ann Vandenberg - Bellville Rick & Ann Tigchelaar - Binbrook Bill & Tina Vahrmeyer - Fenwick Clarence & Nellie Sikma - Lakefield Pete & Linda Vandenberg - Burlington Ron & Nancy Vandenberg - Caistor Centre Neil & Mary Jane Van Geest - Grimsby 31 grandchildren and 62 great-grandchildren</p> <p>An Open House will be held D.V. on Monday, May 19, 2003 from 2:30 till 5:00 p.m. at Grimsby Mountainview Christian Reformed Church 290 Main St. East (Hwy #8) Grimsby Mailing Address: Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5</p> <p>1948 May 5 2003 Franeker Cobourg</p> <p>With thankfulness to God for his love and blessings we are pleased to announce the 55th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>JOHN and JANNY SCHOON (nee Bergsma)</p> <p>Congratulations and Love from: Joyce & Peter McBride Karen, Jonathan Teena & Bob Druce Jennifer & Derek (Lauryn) Jack & Cathi Schoon Devon, Philip Dick & Kim Schoon Rachel, Erin Alice & Matt Holleman Amy, Mark, Vicki, Lucas Peter Schoon Keifer</p> <p>Mailing Address: 232 Tweed St Cobourg ON K9A 2R8</p> <p>1953 May 22 2003</p> <p>"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." John 15:12</p> <p>With praise and thanksgiving, we rejoice with our parents on the celebration of their 50th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>DIRK and MARIAN BROER (nee Gritter)</p> <p>We pray that God will continue to be with you and bless you for many years to come. Love and best wishes from: Nancy & Jeff Sean, Craig, Kevin Judy & Murray Emily & Ron, Patti, Debbie & Matt, Zachary, Daniel, Timothy, David, Benjamin Case & Janice Danielle, Gregory, Joshua, Michael, Zachary, Nathaniel Steve & Lorraine Richard, Stephanie, Christopher Carol & Todd Derek, Meghan</p> <p>We also remember, with love, Janet, Keith & Rachel who went to be with our Lord, September, 1991. Home Address: 22 Lawrence Cres. Aylmer ON N5H 1B5</p> <p>Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us at an Open House to be held on May 24, 2003, from 2-4 p.m. at the Aylmer Christian Reformed Church. Best wishes only, please.</p>
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Thank You <p>We would like to thank our children and grandchildren, family, neighbors, and friends for making our 50th Anniversary so very special! Thanks for the cards, gifts, flowers, donations made on our behalf, and the many phone calls.</p> <p>To God be the Glory!</p>  <p>Bert & Jo Oosterhof</p>		
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Classifieds



Obituary

Zuidland, Z.H. Hepworth, ON
Jan 28, 1910 April 16, 2003

The Lord took home peacefully

ARENDJE ZEVENBERGEN
(Nee Vilelander)

in her 94th year.
Beloved wife of the late
Jacob Zevenbergen (1991)
Beloved mother of:
Maartje & John Wolters
Coby & Bill Heyns
John & Jenny Zevenbergen
Arie & Alice Zevenbergen
Len & Dianne Zevenbergen
Gerda & Don Alexander
Vida & Bill Dove
Predeceased by a son Maarten
(1969) and daughter Jane (1983)
Dear Grandmother of:
36 grandchildren, 68 great-grandchildren
and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

Correspondence Address:
Mrs. John Neerhof, RR #3
Chatsworth ON N0H 1G0

1 Corinthians 13

"And now these three remain: faith,
hope and love. But the greatest of

Events

YOUTH DIRECTOR/PASTOR

The three Christian Reformed Churches of
Sarnia, Ontario are seeking a **full time Youth Director/Pastor**
to continue a unique and exciting combined youth ministry. Solid
programming & committed volunteer leadership is already in place.
Candidate must have strong relational and administrative skills plus
the desire and ability to lead and equip our youth, helping them to
grow in faith and service to our Lord.

Please send resume and inquiries to:

Art Capelle,
2261 Confederation Sarnia ON N7T-7H3
519-337-4660 or email: artc@rivernet.net

Community Christian
Reformed Church

(Kitchener, Ontario)
www.ccrcc.on.ca

a vibrant, growing and youthful church, is looking for a
Full Time Youth Leader/Pastor

Must have experience and ability in building relationships with youth,
helping them to grow in faith and service to our Lord. Requires a College/
University degree. Ordination an asset. Please apply by May 15, 2003.
Kitchener is a diverse, growing, metropolitan area with three thriving
College/Universities.

Contact: Fred Vanderheide Ph: 519-743-6673
E-Mail: vdheide@golgen.net
or Claire Elgersma: Ph: 519-578-2508
E-mail: rayelgersma@sympatico.ca

WESTMOUNT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH,
in beautiful Strathroy, Ontario, is searching for a **Director of Music**
(part time). We are praying and looking for a Director of Music who:
is able to lead worship on a keyboard, is familiar with traditional
hymns and contemporary songs, is willing to lead - be part of - a
praise team and is comfortable in team ministry.
For more information, please contact Renata Nydam, church office
(519-245-2430) Email address: wcrcc@sympatico.ca
Mailing address: 405 Drury Lane, Strathroy, ON, N6G 3G2.

Senior Pastor

The First Christian Reformed Church of Chilliwack
located 60 miles/ 100 kilometres east of Vancouver, BC, in the beautiful
Fraser Valley, seeks a Senior Pastor for our congregation of 580
members. We pray that the Lord will provide a pastor who can, by
solid biblical preaching and by example, help us toward our goal of
"helping people to know and serve Jesus". Our Sunday services are
changing gradually from traditional to more contemporary, with
growing member participation. The Senior Pastor will have a signifi-
cant voice in the calling of an associate pastor as we proceed with
plans to develop an effective team ministry. For a job description and
a church profile please contact our Search Committee Chairman,
Norman Brouwer at 604-792-9380
or email: normbrouwer@hotmail.com

Events

Join us as we celebrate
the faithful service in Christian education of:

Coby Koene (39 years) and
George Vandezande (38 years)

at a

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION
OPEN HOUSE

May 24, 2003

7 p.m Open House begins
(8 p.m. program)

Beacon Christian Elementary School

300 Scott St. St. Catharines, Ontario L2N 1J3

Contributions to a memory book (pictures, stories, memories, etc.)

are encouraged! Please submit by May 9.

If unable to attend, please send greetings by May 23.

esoffice@beaconchristian.org

You are invited

To an Evening of Celebration in honour of

MARC and DORA STROOBOSSCHER

Retiring after many years of dedication and service.

Please join us on

Friday May 23, 2003

Reception at Covenant Christian School

6470 Smithville Rd. Smithville, ON 6:30 to 7:30 P.M.

Program at Smithville District High School

6488 Smithville Rd., Smithville, ON 8 P.M..

Best Wishes may be sent to: sdoffice@sdch.on.ca

Half Time Ministries

Coordinator - New position
in Classis Toronto.

Classis Toronto is seeking a
high energy, Spirit driven leader.
The coordinator will be
responsible to work with local
churches by promoting ministry
opportunities. The successful
applicant should have a passion
for empowering the church, be a
self-starter able to work within a
flexible schedule, have web
management skills and the ability
to communicate effectively with
congregations and ministry
partners.

For further job description and
submission of resume contact

**Rev. Nick Overduin, Stated
Clerk, at**

416-938-9520 or email
nickoverdn@aol.com.

Deadline for resumes is

June 15/03.

Dordt College

Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

Agriculture

Oversee the operation of Dordt's 200-acre Agriculture Stewardship
Center, teach selected agriculture and biosystems courses, and
contribute to the development of a new biotechnology initiative.

Theatre Arts

Faculty/staff position in design.

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled.
To learn more about a position and receive application materials,
qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and
educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest
and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College

498 4th Ave. NE

Sioux Center, IA

51250-1697

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs.

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly
encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled
persons.



ASSOCIATE PASTOR

New Life Church

a dynamic, cell-based, contemporary and multi-staff church in Abbotsford, British Columbia, is looking for
a full-time associate pastor. Are you someone who loves to preach, who loves to equip others for leader-
ship, and who loves people? If you are and you are able to function at a senior staff level in a team envi-
ronment - then we want to hear from you! Please send your enquiries &/or resume, to:

Elsie Bakker ebakker@newlife.crc.ca or fax 604-852-1554

Classifieds

Miscellaneous

Business for Sale

Properous 50 year old business for sale

The store is located in **Edmonton** and specializes in

- * Dutch goods
- * Butcher shop
- * Dry goods
- * Giftware

Building also available to purchase.

Interested parties contact:

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17409 107 Avenue Suite 100
Edmonton AB T5S 1E5
Fax: 1-780-484-4744

Shalom Manor (Grimsby) INVESTMENT NOTES

\$7 million total offering

- 5-year maturity 5.1% interest
- 4-year maturity 4.8% interest
- 3-year maturity 4.5% interest
- 2-year maturity 4.1% interest
- 1-year maturity 3.5% interest

Interest on the notes will be paid semi-annually or may be compounded

Proceeds from the sales of notes will be used to mortgage the redevelopment of Shalom Manor and are secured by a promissory note.

For further information contact:

John Koornneef, Chair of Finance Committee
1-905 - 309-7403

or

Liz Van Ryn - Administrative Manager
12 Bartlett Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5
1-905 - 945-9631

Beacon Of Grace Bible Church

2003 SPRING CONFERENCE

Theme:

"CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE"

SPEAKER: Pastor Ricky Kurth - Berean Bible Society
DATES: Friday May 16 - 7:00 p.m.
 Saturday May 17 - 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
 Sunday May 18 - 10:30 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Woodland Public School
 1511 Seventh St., St. Catharines, ON (QEW exit #51)

For more information, call: Jim Bartkiw **905-562-7170**

No registration required; no admission charge; freewill offering



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Protecting Freshwater Resources

(NC)—The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater to raise awareness of the importance of protecting and managing freshwater resources. Water is a renewable but finite resource. Continually cycling from the atmosphere to the earth and back to the atmosphere, there is the same amount of water now as when the Earth was formed.

However, population growth, ever-increasing demand, and environmental pollutants are increasingly threatening this all-important resource.

Humans cannot survive without freshwater. Yet, freshwater lakes, rivers, and wetlands hold less than 1 per cent of the world's water. In comparison, about 2 per cent of freshwater resources are frozen or underground, and saltwater oceans and seas contain the remaining 97 per cent of the world's water supply.

We all have to do our part to ensure that we protect and manage this resource responsibly. This doesn't mean huge sacrifices. Individual Canadians can take simple actions that leave lasting effects:

- Replacing an 18 litre per flush toilet with an ultra-low-volume (ULV) 6 litre flush model represents a 70 per cent savings in water flushed.
- Don't dispose of solvents, cleaners or chemicals down your drains.
- Keep a jug of drinking water in the fridge rather than letting your tap run to get cold water when you want a drink.
- Water your lawn early in the morning after the dew has dried to reduce loss due to evaporation.
- A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 000 litres of water in a single year. Check yours today. Put two or three drops of food colouring in the tank at the back of the toilet. Wait a few minutes. If the colour shows up in the bowl, there is a leak.

For more information on freshwater or for more tips on how you can help protect this important resource, visit Environment Canada's Web site, The Green Lane, at www.ec.gc.ca/water.

News Canada

ENVIRO Tip

(NC)—Keep a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator, instead of running the tap until the water gets cool each time.

- News Canada

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

- May 10,11** Beth-El CRC, 365 Queen St.E., Acton, Ont. 50th Anniversary. Sat. 3 p.m. for a social hour, then a banquet & evening program. Sunday - special thanksgiving service. For info: 519-853-0991
- May 16, 17,18** The Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of **Edmonton**, Alberta, 50th anniversary. For more info, visit our website: members.shaw.ca/maranatha_edmonton.50th/ For banquet tickets call Edie Boonstra at 780-477-8617 or email: maranatha_edmonton.50th@shaw.ca
- May 16,17,18** Beacon of Grace Bible Church 2003 Spring Conference. Theme: Christian Living in the Dispensation of Grace. Woodland School, St.Catharines. See ad this issue for more information.
- May 17** **Dutch Day at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton** 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Official opening at 11 a.m. by Jan Hesselink (Consulate General) Games, food, prizes!! See ad this issue
- May 17, 18** The CRC, **Medicine Hat, AB**, 50th anniversary. Saturday, registration at 10 a.m., banquet at 1:30 p.m. & a program at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, special services at 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. Ph: 403-526-5522 or email Bill: wmslof@telusplanet.net
- June 11** **HOLLANDSE DAG** 10 o'clock Moorfield Community Center. Samenhang, voordrachten, speciale muziek. For information, call H. Rumph at 519-638-2053
- June 28, 29** All Nations CRC, **Halifax**, hosts 50th Anniversary celebration. In conjunction with Pier 21 75th celebrations. Pancake Brunch, Sat. & Sunday worship celebration. Call 902-429-7136 or visit www.allnationscrc.org See ad in this issue for details.
- Oct 10-14** The **Transcona** CRC (Winnipeg, Manitoba) will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary with praise, thanksgiving & fellowship. For info call: Bev Steendam at 204-853-2150 or jsteenda@mts.net
- Dec 5,6,7** **Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta**, 50th anniversary - weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship All former and present members and friends are invited. For info, call: Eleanor Wildeboer at 403-782-2602 or e-mail wilelwildeboer@aol.com (See ad Mar 17 issue)



Tollendale Village

*A Christian Retirement Community
located in Barrie, Ontario*

**Reservations for Apartments are now being accepted
for Occupancy in summer 2004**

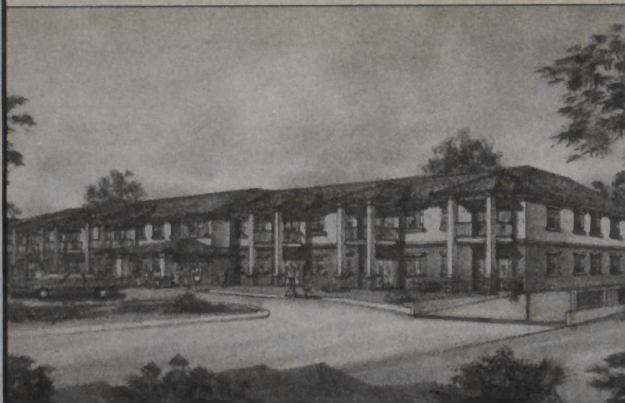
Tollendale Village is a planned Interdenominational Christian Retirement Community located on 14 acres of prime residential land adjacent to an extensive City Owned natural park and close to numerous other recreational facilities, including the waterfront. Phase 1 and 2, consisting of a total of 20 semi-detached homes and 132 one and two bedroom apartments were completed in 2000 and 2002 respectively and are fully occupied. We are currently constructing our next Phase consisting of another 132 apartments and our Village Square. The Village Square will house a 450 seat chapel, 100 seat Dining room, a convenience store and many other amenities. Also being constructed is an addition to our underground parking garage. Construction started in October 2002 and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2004. We are currently about 70 % reserved, and there are still a large variety of apartments available.

For more information please visit our comprehensive Website at
www.tollendalevillage.ca
or call us at our office at
705-722-0469 (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mon - Fri)

THE LIVING WORD

Sermons for reading
services
Contact:
R. Vanderploeg,
Secr./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1

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For more information:

Call
613-392-1818 (John Van Huizen)

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Voor nadere informatie, telefoon:
Hilbert Rumph, tel. **519-638-2053**

Dutch Day at Holland Christian Homes!!

May 17 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Official Opening - 11 a.m. **Jan Hesselink** (Consulate General)

Come join us for

croquettes, fresh stroopwafels, herring, all day Dutch entertainment,
grabbel ton, lots of door prizes, draws, contests.

The grand prize of a **free trip to the Netherlands** is sponsored by
DCA Travel, DUCA Credit Union, and Martinair.

This is an outdoor, under tent, event.

For more information, contact Mrs. R. Van Duyn at **905-460-0087**

Great way to promote Dutch culture with your family and friends.

Check out our website at: www.christiancourier.ca for community events.

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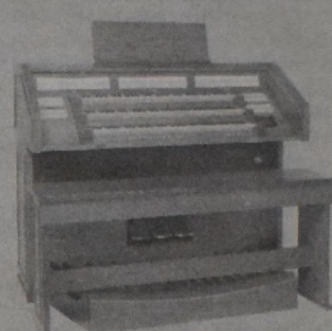


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